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R. Norton

D I S S E N T

FROM THE

Dissenters

CHURCH of *ENGLAND*,

Fully justified :

And proved the genuine and just consequence of the

Allegiance due to *CHRIST*,

the only *LAWGIVER* in the *CHURCH*.

B E I N G

The *DISSENTING GENTLEMAN'S*

T H R E E

LETTERS and *POSTSCRIPT*,

In answer to

Mr. *JOHN WHITE*'s on that Subject.

L O N D O N :

Printed and sold by *J. WAUGH*, at the *Turk's-Head*
in *Lombard-Street* ; and *A. TOZER*, at *Exeter*.

M, DCC, LIII.

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D I S T R I B U T I O N

FROM THE

Church of ENGLAND

Folly justified:

And proved the genuine and just foundation of the

Alliance due to CHRIST

the only Law given in the Church.



The Bishop of LITTLE MARSH

THREE

LETTERS and POSTSCRIPT

In answer to

Mr. JOHN WHITTE on this Subject.

L O N D O N

Printed and sold by J. WATSON, at the Theatre-Francoise, in the Strand, at the Sign of the Anchor.

MDCCLIII

THE
P R E F A C E.

THE Gentleman to whom these Letters are addressed having called us forth to a vindication of our *religious* principles and practice; we think ourselves happy that without fear of the heavy fines, imprisonments and deaths, which our Forefathers suffered, we can make our Defence.

A calm and unprejudiced examination of our cause is all the favour we ask. Such an examination, we are humbly confident, will shew——That we separate from the Church of *England* in no one thing, but in which she separates herself (yea, but wherein *she knows* that she separates herself) from the Church of J E S U S C H R I S T——That we are Non-
con-

conformists to the Establishment only in those points in which the Establishment is *not conformed* to the primitive apostolic plan of discipline and worship established in the *word of GOD*——And that would the Governors of this Church be pleased to lay aside those things which they themselves *know* and *acknowledge* to be no parts at all of genuine, original, real *Christianity*; and to be but *the devices* of fallible and weak men; the difference would be no more; our separation would at once vanish; we should immediately *join together, with one heart and one mouth giving glory to GOD*.

Here we rest our cause; upon *that* which is the grand basis of *Protestantism*, and of all rational and reformed Religion; viz. *That the Scriptures are a perfect rule of faith and of manners*: Whoever departs from this, must wander into endless mazes of *Church-tyranny* and *Superstition*; till he plunges at last into that horrid abyss of both, *POPERY*, or the *Church of ROME*.

P R E F A C E.

To every impartial judge our *dissent* from the Church of *England* will appear, nothing but a protest which we publicly make against *A new Edition of CHRISTIANITY, with Corrections and Amendments*, which our brethren of the Establishment have taken upon them to set forth. We are content with the old, the primitive, plan of doctrines and rites which CHRIST and his *Apostles* established in the Church: Our brethren are not; they are for altering, improving upon, and mending CHRIST's scheme: For embellishing and adorning it with some *additional splendors*; and for making *new terms* of Christian communion besides those which CHRIST made: In this we differ from them: And *this* (we pray it may be noted) *this* is the only point in difference betwixt us. Here the merits rest. Which of us have TRUTH and RIGHT of our side we readily submit to every unbiaſſed judgment: Yea, we are even bold to submit it to the *conscience* and the *sedate reflections* of our brethren themselves.

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May the GOD of TRUTH judge betwixt us! We are assured he will judge. To him alone be the glory of dominion over conscience, and of all authority in religion; throughout all Churches, and all ages, Amen.



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THE
Dissenting Gentleman's
A N S W E R
TO
The Rev. Mr. *WHITE*'s
Three Letters, &c.

S I R,

A Debate of this kind I should not have *chose* in the present situation of our publick affairs: but as you have done me the honour of publickly addressing to me *three* long letters for my conviction and edification, gratitude and good manners *constrain* me to answer.

As *worldly* considerations are very strong on your side, I assure you, I have an ear *always open* to any thing that can shew conformity to be my duty. *Dissenters* are not men of so peculiar a turn of mind, as to love suffering and reproach, or to despise the dignities, preferments, and lucrative posts, to the amount of *millions* a year, which are shared among their fellow-subjects, could they with a good Conscience partake of them, as they have a *natural right* to do.

But, notwithstanding this prejudice in favour of your argument, and all the ingenuity with which you set it off, I cannot say it has wrought in me

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the conviction you seemed to hope. So far, Sir, from this, that the more carefully I examine the grounds of my *separation*, the more thoroughly I am convinced of its lawfulness and expedience; that 'tis a *debt* I owe to GOD, to *Liberty*, to *Truth*, and an act of homage and allegiance due to CHRIST, the *only* Law-giver and King in the Church.

I shall not enter upon the enquiry, on which you largely expatiate, who are the *best Livers*, Churchmen or Dissenters? And amongst which the best means for *holy living* are found? Let the world judge betwixt us. Would to GOD that both of us had greater reason to boast!

The controversy betwixt us, Sir, I apprehend may easily be brought to a *plain* and *short* issue, if you will heartily join in it. It turns upon the *single point* of the XXth article of your church, *viz. That THE CHURCH hath power to decree rites and ceremonies, and authority in matters of faith.* For if *THE CHURCH* hath *really* this authority and power, then all objections of the Dissenters about sponsors, the cross in baptism, kneeling at the Lord's-supper, and every other thing, are impertinent and vain: *the Church* having this *authority*, ought reverently to be obeyed. And, if instead of two or three ceremonies, it had enjoined two or three score; and if to the *thirty-nine articles* it had added an hundred besides, we ought meekly to have bowed down to her *spiritual jurisdiction*, and to have practised and believed as *the Church* had taught and enjoined.

But, if on the contrary, Sir, *the Church* hath really and in truth, *NO power at all*, nor *authority* of this kind; yea, if CHRIST, the great *Law-giver* and *King* of the Church, hath expressly commanded that *NO POWER* of this kind shall ever be claimed,

claimed, or ever be yielded, by any of his followers, then your Church is reprehensible and highly criminal before GOD, for usurping this power: and then the Dissenters are justified, and will have honour before GOD, for entering their protest against such Usurpation; for asserting the rights and privileges of the Christian Church; and standing fast in the liberty wherewith CHRIST has made them free.

Our separation from the establishment you are pleased to represent in very terrifying and black colours, as a sin of near the first magnitude.—

“ Our Ministers, you say, have guilt lying heavily upon them on account of their schismatical and uncatholick proceedings.—They are notoriously peccant (*i. e.* are great sinners) in throwing off the authority of those whom they ought to obey and submit themselves to.—Their conduct is such as you challenge all the wit and ingenuity of the nation ever to reconcile with *holy living*.—You represent them as carnal, evil, and deceitful workers, disorderly walkers, whom GOD will, undoubtedly, for these things, bring into judgment*; and *the faithful*, far from being permitted to enter into any *pastoral relation* to them, are not permitted to have any *Christian communion* with them; no, not so much as any *intimate unnecessary acquaintance and familiarity* with them in common life†;” with much more to the same purpose.

You speak also “ of the *Lay-dissenter*, as having stained his soul with guilt‡; and of the doctrine on which our separation is built, as being *false* and *dangerous*||. This you wish me to lay to heart, and seriously to consider.”

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I have,

* Letter I. page 82, 83. † Letter II. page 8. ‡ Letter II. page 26. || Letter III. page 59.

I have, according to your wish, Sir, *lain it to heart*, and *seriously considered*. The result of my consideration I shall now freely give you ; and in return heartily wish, that laying aside all prejudice and *worldly attachments*, you would impartially consider—What is the true nature and constitution of the *Christian Church* ; and what the allegiance, which, as a subject of JESUS CHRIST, you owe to HIM the *only* Law-giver and King in the Church ; who will shortly call you to account for your conduct in this respect.

To come then to the point—THE CHURCH, you say, and solemnly subscribe it, *hath power to decree rites, and authority in matters of faith*. This is the grand hinge upon which the whole controversy turns. Now here, Sir, let me ask you,

FIRST, *What CHURCH* is it, to whom this authority and power is given ? You will, doubtless, say, the *Church of England* ; for the *Church of England* expressly claims and exercises this power ; and you *avow* and *defend* it in this exercise and claim : yea, this is the *very basis* on which its whole frame and hierarchy stand. It obliges all its Ministers to subscribe to *articles of faith*, which it hath *authoritatively* decreed ; and to use in religious worship *ceremonies* and *rites*, which it hath *authoritatively* enjoined.

But mind, Sir, I beseech you, the consequences of this claim. If the *Church of England* hath really this authority and power ; hath not the *Church of France*—the *Church of Spain*—the *Church of Rome* the very same ? Hath *England*, in this matter, any privilege from GOD, any spiritual prerogative, any charter from Heaven, which its *neighbour countries* have not ? You will not pretend it has. But if it has *no* privilege nor prerogative of this kind, then
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the *Church of France*, and the *Church of Rome* have also, you acknowledge, POWER to decree rites and ceremonies in GOD's worship, and AUTHORITY in points of faith; consequently, all the fopperies and superstitions of the *Romish Church*, at least, which cannot be proved to be contrary to the word of GOD, are to be reverently submitted to by all the members of that Church, and cordially received.

But will not your claiming this power for the *Church* absolutely overthrow the *Reformation* itself, and subvert the very foundation of the Church you seek to establish? For, till you can shew, why the *Church of England* is possessed of this power, but not the *Church of Rome*; why a body of acknowledged fallible Men in *Britain* have authority to make and to enjoin articles of faith, but not a body of pretended infallible men at *Trent*; whence ENGLAND came thus spiritually-gifted, and endowed beyond all its neighbour kingdoms—your separation from the *Church of Rome* is incapable of a just and solid defence.

To this, perhaps, you will reply—But our Church hath expressly guarded against any such abuse of the power it claims, by adding in the XXth Article—*Yet is it not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to GOD's word written; neither may it so expound one place of Scripture that it be repugnant to another.* But, upon this, I intreat your patience for these two remarks:

1st, Whatever ceremony or rite then cannot be shewn to be CONTRARY to GOD's word, your Church, yea, the *Church of Rome* hath, you acknowledge, full authority to enjoin: consequently, as your Church, by virtue of this authority, hath enjoined the cross in baptism, it hath full power also

to require you to *cross yourselves*, whenever you enter the place of worship, say your prayers, look toward the east, touch the bible, sit at Meat—— It hath *full power* to enjoin the use of *salt* and *spittle* in *baptism*, *chrism*, *extreme unction*, and an hundred other things, which are no more *contrary* to *GOD's word* than the cross in baptism is.

As your Church now *consecrates ground*, it has every whit as much *power* to consecrate the *other element*, and to make *holy water*, as well as *holy earth*; and to order it to be decently sprinkled upon its members (*for all things*, you know, *are to be done decently and in order*) in token that they shall keep themselves pure from sin: It hath *power* to consecrate *holy knives* to cut the sacramental bread; *holy basins* and *ewers* for the priests to wash in before the sacrament, *holy vestments and robes*, and a great variety of *holy utensils*, lighted *tapers* for the altar, &c. (all which, you know, Sir, was done by your admired bishop *Laud*) knocking on the breast, bowing towards the east, prostration before the altar.—All these, I say, and innumerable other ceremonies *your Church* claims *authority* and *power* to enjoin; for none of these can be shewn to be more *contrary to the word of GOD*, or to be a whit more superstitious, ridiculous, or absurd, than the *crossing* at baptism, or the *solemn consecration* of churches and their yards. But,

2dly, The *limitation* or *guard*, which the article seems to put upon *this power* of the Church, is really of no force, and amounts to nothing at all.

For tho' it says—that the Church *may not ordain any thing* CONTRARY to *GOD's word*, nor so expound one scripture as to be REPUGNANT to another: yet of this repugnance and contrariety, the
CHURCH

CHURCH *alone*, you will observe, and not every *private person*, is allowed to be the proper *judge*: for else the article is absurd; it actually overthrows itself; and takes away with one hand, what it gives with the other. For, if every *private person* hath authority to *judge* of the Church's decisions, and to *reject* them, if they appear to him repugnant to Scripture, then the *Church's authority* in points of faith comes to just nothing at all. It is an authority to decree, where none are bound to submit; that is, an authority over no body, an authority to do nothing. But such a senseless, unmeaning, impertinent claim, can never be the design and import of *this article*. It does claim therefore for the Church some *real authority* to settle points of faith; consequently, to points thus *authoritatively* settled by it, private Christians, its members, are reverently to submit, even tho' to their own judgments they appear repugnant to the word of God.

This, Sir, must be the real meaning and intent of the article, notwithstanding the *restrictive clause*. Accordingly, in consequence of this claim, your Church hath *authoritatively* decreed *thirty-nine* articles of faith; and these it declares to have decreed *for the taking away difference of opinion, and to establish an agreement in true Religion**. The plain language of *authority*. These articles it obliges all its ministers to subscribe; and our *Princes*, as Heads and Governors of the *Church*, have *authoritatively* forbid its Clergy to preach any thing repugnant to them, and required them to frame their sermons according to *the plan* here prescribed. From all which it appears, that, notwithstanding the *pretended limitation*, there is a *real authority* claimed

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* Preface to XXXIX articles.

by the Church, that is to say, by its *Governors*, to settle points of faith. But if there be *such authority* really vested in them, then the people are bound to *submit* to their decisions, and have no right of private judgment to *examine* or *reject* them; for there cannot be *two* CONTRADICTORY rights; a *right* in governors to prescribe, and a *right* in subjects to refuse.—But if the *Church of England* has really this authority and right, the *Church of Rome* had it before her; and, as the elder and *mother-church*, ought to have been obeyed. The *reformation*, therefore, as we are wont to call it, was a rebellion against superiors, a disobedience to the authority vested in *the Church*, and ought, as such, to be renounced by returning to the *Church of Rome*.

In this manner, Sir, a *Romish priest* will turn upon the *Church of England* its own dangerous artillery; and by the meer concessions of this XXth article, thousands of *Proselytes* have, no doubt, been gained from you. Nor, with all your ingenuity, would you find it easy to ward off the force of such arguing, should any of your parishioners be likely to be seduced. And this, perhaps, is the reason why the numerous converts these Priests are said to make, are gathered *all* from *your Church*; whereas, from amongst *the Dissenters*, you hardly ever hear of one gained. But,

SECONDLY. I want much to be enlightened as to THE PERSONS who are invested with *this authority and power*.

You say, it is *the Church*: But *who*, I pray, are *the Church*, in whom this great *power* is lodged? You will please to observe well, Sir, not the *Bishops* and *Clergy*, who are wont to speak of themselves as our *spiritual pastors and guides*, as being *over us in*
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the Lord, as *stewards of the mysteries*, &c. This power to order the manner of GOD's worship, and to settle articles of faith, is *not* at all lodged in *them*, but entirely in the KING and PARLIAMENT of these realms.

You need not be informed, Sir, that *all the Clergy* of this kingdom, with *all the Bishops* at their head, have not the least *authority* to enjoin one ceremony or rite of worship; or to either *establish* or *annul* one article of faith. No, but *all* power and jurisdiction relating to these matters is lodged chiefly in *lay-hands*; 'tis solely in the KING and PARLIAMENT, and *the Clergy* are to act in all things under *their* direction and controul. The KING and PARLIAMENT are in truth the real *Fathers, Governors*, or *BISHOPS* of this Church; *these ONLY* have power to make or to unmake forms and rites of worship, and do *authoritatively* instruct and prescribe to *the Clergy* what they are to believe—in what manner, and to whom the sacraments are to be given—what prayers they are to offer up—what doctrines to preach—who are to be admitted to the *episcopate* or *priesthood*; and who to be refused—by what ceremonies, and prayers, and exhortations they are to be set apart, and consecrated to their office.—These, with every other circumstance relating to religion and the worship of GOD, which is *authoritatively* prescribed or enjoined in *your Church*, you know, Sir, not the *Bishops* and *Clergy*, but the KING with *his Parliament*, are the *ONLY persons* who have *authoritatively* enjoined and prescribed them.

“ The *Clergy* of the whole land, in convocation
 “ assembled, cannot so much as attempt any ca-
 “ nons or constitutions without the King's li-
 “ cence. If the King and Clergy make a canon,

“ tho’ it binds the Clergy *in re ecclesiastica*, yet it
“ does not bind Laymen *.”

Yea, so far, Sir, were the *Bishops* and *Clergy*
from having any hand in the first forming our pre-
sent established Church, or in ordering its rites and
articles of faith, that it was done not only *without*,
but in *actual opposition* to them: “ For in the first
“ of Q. Eliz. the *Parliament alone* established the
“ Queen’s supremacy and the Common-prayer-
“ book, in spite of all opposition from *the Bishops*
“ in the House of Lords; and *the convocation* then
“ sitting, were so far from having any hand in
“ those church-acts for reformation, that they
“ presented to the Parliament several propositions
“ in behalf of the tenets of *Popery*, directly con-
“ trary to the proceedings of the Parliament.†”—

Hence then, Sir, I think you must be absolute-
ly forced to own (what I know gentlemen of your
robe don’t care to hear) *viz.* That the *Church of*
England is really a PARLIAMENTARY Church;
that it is not properly an *ally*, but a mere *creature*
of the State. It depends entirely upon the *acts* and
authority of PARLIAMENT for its very essence
and frame. The qualifications of its ministers, their
power

* *Vide Examination of the Codex, &c. page 114, 148.* “ By
“ the 25th of Hen. VIII. cap. 19. it is a *præmunire* for the con-
“ vocation to meet without the *King’s* writ: and when they are
“ met to do any thing without the *King’s* licence: and then no re-
“ solution of theirs to have the force of a *canon*, unless the *King*
“ confirm it. Nor is it then valid, if it be contrariant or repug-
“ nant to the laws, statutes, and customs of this realm, or be to
“ the damage or hurt of the *King’s* prerogative royal—And of this
“ the courts of *Westminster-Hall* must judge.”—*Hale*, in his *Ana-*
lysis, page 12. says, “ If ecclesiastical laws are not confirmed by
“ *Parliament*, the *King* may revoke and annul them at his will and
“ pleasure.”—*Vide Notes on an Answer to the Examination of the*
Bishop of London’s Codex.

† *Vide Priestcraft in Perfection, Pref. page 4.*

power to officiate, the manner in which they are to administer the sacraments, are all limited and prescribed by *authority of Parliament*, and this *authority*, which at first made, can *alone* alter and new-make it; can abolish, or add to its articles or rites, according to its pleasure, even tho' the whole body of *Bishops* and *Clergy* ever so much dislike, or protest earnestly against it.

It is a point therefore *incontestible*, and absolutely out of doubt, that THE CHURCH, your article declares to have *this authority* and *power* here, is the KING and PARLIAMENT of these realms; and it is *no other* than they. But,

THIRDLY. The grand point which yet sticks, and which, without your assistance, I shall never get over, is, how came the *civil magistrate* by this authority in the *Church of CHRIST*? Who gave *him* this power to decree rites in Christian worship, which *Christ* never decreed; and to make articles of faith which *Christ* never made? Neither CHRIST, nor the *Apostles*, ever gave him this authority; whence then is it derived?

The *subjection to higher powers, and obedience to magistrates*, which the scriptures enjoin *Christians*, relates *only to civil*, not at all to *religious* matters: For this obvious reason; that the *magistrate* at that time was every where *Pagan*. The Apostles therefore instead of paying, or exhorting Christians to pay, any subjection to him in *religious affairs*, strenuously exhorted them to renounce and disavow it—to come out from among them and be separate. They were every where, you know, Sir, *Dissenters* from the *established Church*.

CHRISTIANITY is so far from enjoining, that it actually forbids, obedience to *civil governors* in things of a *religious* nature. It commands us to
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call no man upon earth father or master*, *i. e.* to acknowledge no authority or jurisdiction of any in matters of religion, but to remember, that ONE, one only is our master and law-giver, even CHRIST; and all Christians are brethren; *i. e.* stand upon an equal foot, having no dominion over one another. Tho' the Princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they who are great exercise authority upon them, yet it shall not, our LORD says, be so amongst you †. Nay, but your Church replies, in this its XXth article, it shall be so amongst us.—There are some who have authority over others in matters of faith.—There are other masters besides CHRIST.—Thus the article and the scripture manifestly clash: will you be so good, Sir, as to adjust the controversy betwixt them, and tell me which I am to follow.

The Church is CHRIST's kingdom: *a kingdom not of this world*: For his voluntary humiliation and suffering of death, he is advanced to the high honour of being sole Law-giver, Judge, and Sovereign in religious matters.—He only hath authority to fix the terms of communion for his followers or church; and the terms which He hath fixed no man upon earth, nor body of men, have authority to set aside, to alter, or new-make. And if any men upon earth shall presume to alter, or new-make, terms of communion in his Church, they are guilty of great arrogance, and invade his authority and throne. But this, we apprehend, is what you have done. You will not now receive a person to public baptism or the Lord's Supper upon the terms on which CHRIST and his Apostles would have received him. Neither CHRIST nor his Apostles ever made the sign of the cross, or other sponsors besides the

* Matt. xxiii. 8, 9.

† Matt. xx. 25.

the parents, necessary to a child's baptism ; nor did they ever make *kneeling* a necessary term of receiving the sacramental-supper ; but both those *you* make necessary *. Thus you have taken upon you to *new-model* the Church of CHRIST, to change and set aside *his* laws, and to make *others* in their room.

Now give me leave to ask you, Sir, by what authority do you presume to reject those from *your* Church, whom in your Conscience you believe CHRIST and *his Apostles* would have received into *theirs* ? Are *you* wiser than *they* ? Or is *your* Church better framed, and more perfect than *theirs* ? If an honest and sincere Christian now brings his child to you to be publicly baptised, desiring it may be done *without* the sign of the cross, and that *himself* may stand forth as *surety* for its education ; would you not *refuse* him ? Or if he desired to be admitted to the communion of Christians, in the other sacrament of the supper, but that he might not take it *kneeling* : Would you not *reject* him ? But if the same person had come to JESUS CHRIST or the *Apostles*, offering himself and child upon the *same terms*, would they not have *received* him ? But how is it, Sir, that you take upon you to *reject* from CHRIST's Family and Church, those whom you believe HIMSELF would have *received* ? Is not this *lording it over* GOD's heritage, and usurping CHRIST's throne ? Is it not setting yourselves up for *law-makers* and *rulers* in his kingdom ; claiming homage from *his* subjects ? And are not
his

* The XXVIIth canon requires, the minister never wittingly to administer the communion to any, but to such as kneel. The XXIXth canon requires, that no parent shall be urged to be present at his child's baptism ; nor be admitted to answer as godfather for his own child.

his *faithful* subjects, by the allegiance they owe HIM, obliged to enter their protest against such usurpation, and to *stand fast in the liberty where-with CHRIST has set them free?*

Where then, let me appeal to your own sober judgment, does the *guilt of schism* lie: upon you or upon us? Upon us, who offer ourselves to *communion* in your Church upon the terms which CHRIST appointed, and are ready to do *every thing* which CHRIST has commanded: Or upon you, who absolutely *reject us*, unless, besides what CHRIST hath ordered, we will submit also to some orders and devices of *your own?* We come as the *Lord's servants*, and desire to eat at the *Lord's-table*, with reverent submission to all *his* appointments. Nay but, say you, you shall not come to the *Lord's-table*, unless you will *kneel*; *i. e.* unless you will come in that posture, which tho' CHRIST in *his* wisdom did not think proper, yet which WE in *our* wisdom have thought proper to *ordain*. In other words; unless besides being CHRIST's *servants*, you will also be *ours*; and pay subjection to *our* institution and authority in this religious rite.

This, Sir, is the true state of the controversy betwixt us: judge now, I pray you, with the impartiality of a *Christian*, who makes the *schism*, and who has reason to fear being brought into judgment, by the great *Law-giver* of the Church, for the unhappy breach which subsists.—Let a *great Prelate* who at present adorns one of the highest stations of *your Church* be heard as judge betwixt us.—“ In
 “ all other societies, the *express* will of the *founder*,
 “ and the terms of fellowship and communion
 “ which *he* has laid down, are accounted *sacred*.
 “ In all other kingdoms the *will* of the *supreme*
 “ *power* is a *law*. No one pretends, or dares pre-
 “ tend,

“ tend, to make laws of equal force with his:
 “ How hard then is the fate of the *Christian Church*,
 “ or of the *Kingdom of CHRIST*, when *his will* is
 “ declared *insufficient*, and the *invented words* and
 “ *decisions* of his subjects are made co-ordinate
 “ with his own, equally exclusive of others of his
 “ subjects from the *communion* of their fellow-sub-
 “ jects! And how hard is the fate of those *belie-*
 “ *vers in him*, who *desire communion upon the terms*
 “ *GOD has prescribed*, to be excluded by the words
 “ of men; by the inventions of men, imposed
 “ upon them for *his precepts*! And how unhappy
 “ is the *Church*, to be reduced by any such me-
 “ thods within *more narrow bounds* than our
 “ *LORD himself has confined it* *!”

But you are in readiness to retort, and with
 great assurance tell me, “ That the *avoidance* of
 “ kneeling *insisted upon* by our Ministers, is not
 “ less an imposition than your enjoining it.—
 “ That we do really *impose* the observance of *one*
 “ *particular gesture* upon our communicants.—
 “ That *sitting* is the regular, unvaried practice of
 “ our Churches; observed as constantly and uni-
 “ versally amongst us, as *kneeling* is amongst you,
 “ —*never allowed* to be departed from; which
 “ our Ministers *require, insist upon, and refuse to*
 “ *abate.*”——And you ask me “ if one should
 “ present himself to take the Sacrament standing,
 “ or offer to take it on his knees, whether I don’t
 “ think he would undergo some severe expostula-
 “ tions, and be plainly told, we had *no such custom,*
 “ *nor the Churches of GOD*, and it would not be
 “ given him at all †.”

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* Bishop of *Winchester*’s Postscript to his Answer to Dr. *Hare*’s Sermon, page 254.

† Letter II. page 56, 57, 58. Letter III. page 8, 9.

I believe the world will be surprized, Sir, and that an *ingenuous blush* will cover your own face, when you find that this account of us is absolutely without truth, and quite contrary to fact. I have spent my whole life amongst the *Dissenters*, and am acquainted with a great number of their Churches and Ministers; but never once, till now, heard that SITTING at the Lord's-table was ever *insisted on* as a term of communion with them; or that it is their *unvaried* and *universal* practice. The contrary to this, I know to be truth. In the Church to which I myself belong, there is a person who for many years has constantly received KNEELING, without the least offence to the congregation, or any expostulation from the Minister on that account. In some of our Churches, I am well informed, there are some who receive *standing*, some *kneeling*: In this every one amongst us is left entirely at his liberty. Tho' the posture of *sitting* be generally thought by us most suitable to the *Commemorative supper* of our LORD; instituted instead of the *Paschal-supper* of the *Jews*; and most agreeable to the practice of CHRIST and his *Apostles*, who, without all peradventure, *sat* around the table; yet in this we are all left to follow freely our own persuasion. Nor is there, I believe, amongst our Ministers one in five hundred, who would refuse to give the Sacrament either *standing* or *kneeling* to any one who thought either of these the fittest posture of receiving. Our liberty as to this matter you might have seen in *Baxter's reformed Liturgy*; where it is expressly said—"And
 " let none of the people be forced to sit, stand, or
 " kneel in the act of receiving, whose judgment is
 " against it." And in Dr. Calamy's brief Account, &c. which you appear to have read—

" The

“ *The Communicants amongst Protestant Dissenters,*
 “ *are AT LIBERTY to use THEIR OWN POS-*
 “ *TURE in the time of receiving; tho’ a table*
 “ *gesture is most commonly used*.*”

Thus, Sir, I have at large considered your charge of SCHISM upon *the Dissenters*; and hope by this time you begin to think more favourably of us; and to *justify* our principles as truly *catholic* and *generous*; the only *broad-bottom* on which the peace of the Church can be solidly fixed; and that *the guilt* of the separation lies wholly on your *Church*, which insists upon UNCHRISTIAN and UNSCRIPTURAL terms of communicating with it.

But I hope to finish your conviction, Sir, and to wipe off every speck of the taint of schism from *Dissenters*, by calling to your remembrance your own excellent definition of the *Catholic or Christian Church*; and reasoning with you on it. “ *The*
 “ *Catholic Church, you say*, is one outward and*
 “ *visible Society DIVINELY instituted; the most*
 “ *admirable and glorious Society under Heaven.*” —
 Mind, Sir, your own words; and it will soon end the debate. If it be a *Society DIVINELY instituted*, then whatever *Society* is not of *divine*, but of *meerly human* institution, is not the *Church of Christ*. If it be a *Society divinely instituted*, then the *terms of admission* into this *Society* and the *qualifications* of its members are *divinely fixed*, *i. e.* fixed by the will and authority of GOD: Whatever *visible Society* then hath its *terms of admission* and the *qualifications* of its members NOT *divinely fixed*, fixed only by the will and authority of men, cannot be the truly *Catholic and Christian Church*.

Now

* Letter to a Divine in Germany, page 11.
 page 73.

† Letter I,

Now here shall I intreat you, Sir, with the impartiality of a *Christian*, who has nothing but *truth* and the *will of God* in view, to stop a moment and compare the CONSTITUTION of the *Church of England*, and the CONSTITUTION of the *Church of Christ*, and see if they are not Societies of a quite different frame; the one a *human*, the other a *divine* institution; the one resting entirely on the authority and will of *men*, the other upon the will and authority of *G O D*.

If you enquire after the constitution and frame of the *Church of Christ*, where must you look for it? only in *the Bible* *. But if you enquire after the constitution and frame of the *Church of England*, where must you look for that? in the *Statute-book*, in the *Canons*, and *Common-prayer-book*, and in the *Codes* of the *English-law*.

The Church of CHRIST is a *religious* establishment, founded upon *the Scriptures*, as the only authentic rule of its doctrines and worship; the Church of ENGLAND is a *civil* establishment, founded upon *Acts of Parliament*, as the only authentic rule of what is to be believed and practised therein. The one a *spiritual structure*, built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, JESUS CHRIST himself being the chief corner-stone: the other a *political structure*, built upon the foundation of the Lords and Commons of the realm, THE KING, as supreme head, being the chief corner-stone.

Into the *Church of Christ* any person may be admitted, who submits to *the terms* appointed by *Christ*: but into the *Church of England* he cannot be admitted, except over and above *these*, he sub-
mits

* *The Bible* only is the Religion of Protestants. *Chillingworth*.

mits also to terms which *human authority* hath instituted and devised.

In *Christ's Church* the Lord's-supper is appointed and used ONLY for *spiritual* and *religious* ends; but, in the *Church of England*, it is notoriously both instituted and used for *political* and *worldly* ends, to qualify for a post. In the *former* 'twas appointed with intention, and as a *mean* of uniting all Christians; and of destroying all variance and distinctions betwixt them. In the *latter* 'tis appointed with intention, and as a *mean*, of *discriminating* and *dividing* Christians; and of making a *distinction* betwixt one and another.

In the *Christian Church*, no openly debauched or scandalously wicked person has a *right* to come to the table of the Lord, or to partake of its provisions; but in the *Church of England*, if such a person has a commission from the King in the army or the fleet, or any profitable post, this gives him a *right* to come to the *communion-table*, a *right* to demand the holy elements at the *Priest's hands*, as a qualification for his post.

In the *scriptural Church* of Christ, there are no such officers ever heard of as *Archbishops*, *Deans*, *Archdeacons*, *Prebendaries*, *Canons*, *Chancellors*, &c. —But there is *another Church*, you know, Sir, where *these* are officers of great influence, of high importance and rank. But whence came this pompous train! From the *apostolic fountain* at *Jerusalem*, or from the *corrupted source* at *Rome*?

The *Church of Christ* never excommunicates, nor pretends to exercise its discipline upon any but its own members; *For what have I to do*, the Apostle says, *to judge them that are without* *? But the *Church of England* extends its ecclesiastical authority over those who *never* belonged to it; and

by a very extraordinary act of power, *excommunicates* such as *never were* of its *communion*; that is, it casts such *from*, who never were *in* it. In common life such a thing would be reckoned *marvellous* indeed. Should I solemnly threaten, yea actually proceed to cast a person *out* of my house, who never was *in* it, I should work as great a miracle as was ever wrought in the *Church of Rome*: But miracles of this kind, Sir, your Church, you know, sometimes works.

Again; the rod with which the *Church of Christ* chastises its delinquents is *spiritual*, not *carnal*; but the rod of the *Church of England* is *carnal*, not *spiritual*. By the constitution of the *former*, the excommunicated member is only to be deprived of *spiritual* privileges, such as fellowship in prayer, singing, sacraments, &c. As for his civil property and rights, it meddles not with these; for *CHRIST'S kingdom is not of this world*; but by the constitution of the *latter*, the excommunicated member is delivered over to the *civil arm*, to humble and chastise him; he is disabled from asserting his natural rights, from being a witness, from bringing actions at law, and if he does not submit in *forty days*, a writ shall issue forth to *imprison him*.—

In the *Church of Jesus Christ*, those who are entrusted with ecclesiastical discipline are solemnly charged before GOD, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect Angels, to be no respecters of persons, to do nothing by partiality, and not to prefer one before another*: neither the gold ring nor the gay cloathing†, nor pecuniary gifts, are to have any influence upon their ecclesiastical proceedings; but the poor are to receive the same measure with the rich. But is it thus, Sir, in the *Church of England*?

* 1 Tim. v. 21.

† James ii. 2, 3.

land? May not a grievous Sinner, according to her constitution, be suffered *to commute?* to have pardon for money, and to skreen himself by a round fee from the stroke of the Church's rod? Yea, when he is going to be delivered, or actually is delivered, into the hands of *the Devil*, and Satan has him in his keeping, will not an *handsome sum* presently pluck him thence, and restore him to the Church's soft and indulgent bosom again?—— You remember, Sir, the Heathen Satyrist,

————— *At vos*

Dicite pontifices, in sacris quid facit aurum.

Perfius, Sat. II.

And you know what was said, upon a like occasion, by a much greater than he—*Thy money perish with thee; because thou hast thought that the gift of God* (Pardon and absolution) *may be purchased with money, thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter* *.

Some of the most *sacred* acts of spiritual jurisdiction, its solemn *censures* and *excommunications*, are exercised in the Church of *England* by *unconsecrated* and meer *laymen*. These *hold the keys*, open or shut, cast out or admit to it, according to their sole pleasure. The *Chancellors*, *Officials*, *Surrogates*—who administer the jurisdiction of spiritual courts, and determine the most important spiritual matters, such as *delivering men to the Devil*, &c. frequently are, and, by express provision of law, *always may be laymen*. And truly, Sir, I greatly pity you gentlemen of the *Clergy*, that some of the most tremendous and solemn parts of your *sacred* office, such as *excommunications*, *absolutions*, &c.

you

* Acts viii. 20, 21.

you are *forced* to perform, not according to, but sometimes, perhaps, directly against your own judgments, as you are *authoritatively* directed and commanded by these *lay persons*. *Forced*, I say, to do it, notwithstanding what you urge about your *own concurrence*; for if you refuse to concur, you are immediately liable to *suspension ab officio & beneficio*; and if you continue obstinate, to be *excommunicated* your ownelves*.

The Church of JESUS CHRIST never owed its support (it scorned to owe its propagation and support) to the *powers, preferments, and riches* of this world; 'twas its *glory*, that it made its way, and was established upon earth, not only *without*, but in *direct opposition* to them: it commands its Ministers *not to STRIVE, but to be gentle to all men; in meekness, instructing those who gainsay*—(2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.) But the Church of England, conscious of its weakness, props itself on every side with *civil dignities and emoluments*; calls in the *powers and riches of this world* to its support and defence; intrenches itself deep under shelter of *penal laws*, and from thence thunders out its *excommunications*, and threats of *fines and imprisonments*, upon any who shall dare to write or speak any thing derogatory to its ceremonies and forms of worship, or its articles of faith †.

There

* There is one thing, says Bishop Burnet, yet wanting to compleat the reformation of the Church; which is, to restore primitive discipline against scandalous persons, the establishing the government of the Church in *ecclesiastical-hands*, and taking it out of *lay-hands*; which have so long prophaned it; and have exposed the authority of the Church and the censures of it, chiefly *excommunication*, to the contempt of the nation; so that the dreadfullest of all censures, is now become the most scorned and despised.———*Hist. Reform. Abridg. page 367.*

† The IV, V, VIth canons solemnly denounce — “ That who-
“ soever shall affirm that the form of God’s worship contained in
“ the

There is one difficulty more, Sir, which I have often revolved, but could never possibly get over ; it seems to hang as a *dead* and *insuperable* weight upon the frame of your Church ; if you can handsomely remove it, you will merit *Lambeth* for a reward.

The *Church of England* and the *Church of Christ* seem to be *two* Societies, absolutely *distinct*, and of a quite *different* constitution, as they have *two* different HEADS, or FOUNTAINS of power, whence all authority, jurisdiction, and ministrations in the *two* Churches severally spring. In the Church of *Jesus Christ*, HIMSELF is *supreme Head*, the only Law-giver and Sovereign: *To us there is but ONE Lord* *. *ONE is your Master, even CHRIST* †. *Gave him to be HEAD over all things to the Church* ‡. *ALL POWER is given to ME, in Heaven and in Earth, go ye therefore teach all nations* ||. *CHRIST* is the *ONLY fountain* of influence, jurisdiction, and power in *his Church*, by commission from whom *alone* all its officers act.

But in the *Church of England*, you well know, Sir, the *King* or *Queen* is *SUPREME HEAD*, “ vested with *all power* to exercise all manner of “ *ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and Archbishops, Bishops, Archdeacons, and other ecclesiastical persons,*

“ the *Common-prayer*, hath any thing in it repugnant to the word of “ *God*—or that any of the *XXXIX* articles, are in any part erroneous, or such as may not with a good conscience be subscribed, “ let him be *EXCOMMUNICATED ipso facto*, and not be restored “ until he repent and publicly revoke his wicked errors.”

And by the *Act of Uniformity*, it is enacted—“ That if any one “ shall declare, or speak any thing in the derogation or depraving of “ the book of *Common-prayer*, he shall, for the *first* offence, suffer “ imprisonment one whole year, without bail or mainprize ; and “ for the *second* offence shall be imprisoned during his life.”

* 1 Cor. viii. 6. † Matt. xxiii. 8. ‡ Ephes. i. 22.
|| Matt. xxviii. 18, 19.

“ sons, have *no manner* of jurisdiction ecclesiastical, but by and under the KING’s *Majesty*, who hath full power and authority to hear and determine *all manner* of causes ecclesiastical; and to reform, and correct *all* vice, sin, errors, heresies, enormities, abuses whatsoever, which by *any manner* of spiritual authority or jurisdiction ought, or may be lawfully reformed*.”—

At the first establishment of this Church under *Hen. VIII.* and *Edw. VI.* all the *Bishops* took out commissions from *the CROWN*, for the exercising of their *spiritual jurisdiction* in these kingdoms, during the *King’s* pleasure only; “ and in their commissions acknowledge all sort of jurisdiction, as well ecclesiastical as civil, to have flowed originally from the *REGAL* power, as from a *supreme Head*, and a *fountain* and *spring* of all magistracy within his own kingdom †.

Yea, even the *power of ordination* itself, which is reckoned a *peculiar* of the episcopal office, the first reformers and founders of this Church derived from the *KING*, and exercised only as by authority from *him*, and during his pleasure. “ Thus *Cranmer* Archbishop of *Canterbury*, *Bonner* Bishop of *London*, &c. took out commissions from *the crown*, importing, that because the Vicegerent (*Cromwel*, a lay-person) could not personally attend the charge in all parts of the kingdom, *the KING* authorises *the Bishop* in his (the *King’s*) stead to ordain, within his diocese, such as he judged worthy of holy orders; to collate to benefices; to give institution; and to execute

“ all

* 26 Hen. VIII. cap. i. 37 Hen. VIII. cap. xvii.
 † Eliz. cap. i. Burnet’s Hist. Reform. Part II.
 Col. p. 91.

“ all other parts of the episcopal authority; and
 “ this during the King’s pleasure only *.”

In consequence of this SUPREMACY, the KING or QUEEN of *this Church* hath power to excommunicate from, or to re-admit into it, independent of, yea, in direct opposition to, all its *Bishops* and *Clergy*. The KING or QUEEN, revoke, if they please, any spiritual censures of the *Bishops* or *Archbishops*; yea, can suspend, deprive, or even excommunicate, themselves; or can, by their proclamation only, without the least confession, humiliation, or satisfaction for their offence, pardon and restore *excommunicated persons*, the vilest offenders, to the Church’s bosom again †.

Yea, further; they have power to forbid all preaching for a time; as did K. *Hen. VIII.* K. *Edw. VI.* Q. *Mary*, Q. *Eliz.*—to limit, instruct, and prescribe to *the Clergy* what they shall, and what they shall not preach; as did Q. *Eliz.* K. *James I.* K. *Charles I.* K. *William*, &c.—Finally, to the King or Queen ONLY does it pertain to declare what is HERESY, and authoritatively to pronounce what *doctrines* and *tenets* are, and what are not, to be censured as such: Nor have all the *Bishops* and *Clergy*, assembled in convocation, the least authority to censure any tenet as *heretical*, if the PRINCE on the throne refuse his consent.

Now here, Sir, I am pressed with an *insuperable difficulty* how to reconcile this constitution of the *Church of England* with the constitution of the *Church of Christ*. Are they not most indisputably *two different Societies*, subject to *two different*, some-
 B times

* *Vid.* Examination of the *Codex Juris*, &c. pages 32, 33.

† A Parson was deprived for adultery; afterward a general pardon came, which pardoned the adultery. It was adjudged that the Parson was *ipso facto*, restored to his benefice. *Coke* 6 Rep. 13.

times *opposite*, authorities, animated and governed by *two different* Heads? In CHRIST's Church, HIMSELF is the *only* Sovereign and Head; HE only hath power to decree ceremonies and rites, to fix terms of communion and authority in points of faith: nor hath any *earthly Prince* power to make laws in *his* kingdom, which shall bind the consciences of *his* subjects; or sovereignly to dictate to *his* servants and ministers what they shall believe, and what they shall preach. Yea, *his subjects* are expressly commanded and charged to receive nothing as *doctrine or parts of religion*, which are only *commandments of men* *.

But in the *Church of England* there is ANOTHER Sovereign, Law-giver, SUPREME HEAD besides JESUS CHRIST; an *authority* which commands things which CHRIST never commanded, which teaches doctrines HE never taught, which enjoins terms of communion, and rites of religious worship, which CHRIST never enjoined.—What now can I judge, Sir! What do you yourself judge! but that the *two Churches* are two distinct and quite *different* Societies (for in *one* and *the same* Society, surely there cannot be *two supreme Heads*) that they are framed after different models, consist of different members, are governed by different officers, statutes, and laws.—Consequently, my SEPARATION or DISSENT from *the one*, does, by no means infer my SEPARATION from *the other*. Yea, what am I to judge but that by the allegiance I owe to CHRIST my ONLY *supreme Head* and King in spiritual matters, I am *obliged* to enter my protest against the pretensions and claims of any OTHER *supreme Head*. For, can a man *serve two masters*? Can he be subject at the same time

to

* Matt. xv. 9.

to TWO *supreme Heads*? Can he be faithful to CHRIST, the *only KING* in the Church, and yet acknowledge ANOTHER *King*, as a fountain of all magistracy and power therein? Surely he cannot.

Permit me, good Sir, to exercise your patience a moment or two more upon this remarkable *contrast*, and I will dismiss the ungrateful subject.

By the constitution of the *Church of Christ*, 'tis expressly ordered and declared—That the WOMAN shall not be suffered publickly to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man *. But by the constitution of the *Church of England*, the WOMAN is permitted publickly to teach, yea, to limit and controul in *spiritual* and *religious* matters, and authoritatively to INSTRUCT all the *Bishops*, and *Clergy*, and *Men* in the land. Thus did Queen *Elizabeth*, thus did Queen *Anne*, and thus hath every Queen authority to do that sits upon our throne; authority to *prescribe* and *dictate* to all, both Ministers and People, what the one are to preach, and the other to receive. And was it not, Sir, a very comely and edifying sight, to behold the two Houses of Convocation waiting upon the good Queen (*Anne* †) in the case of *Whiston's* books upon the Trinity, to be instructed by her Majesty, whether they were to be condemned as *heretical*, or not? That venerable and learned body had solemnly decreed them to be *dangerous* and *heretical*; but this their *censure* was of no force, till they had laid it before the Queen, to have her judgment upon the point. Upon her Majesty's determination it entirely depended, whether *Whiston's* tenets were to be rejected by the *Church of England* as erroneous, or not.

B 2

* 1 Tim. ii. 12.

† Anno 1713.

not. Her Majesty, in this case, was of a *different* opinion from her two Houses of Convocation; she thought not fit to censure the books: So her *single* opinion, strange to relate! her *single* opinion carries it against that of *her Bishops and Clergy*. She over-rules and sets aside all their proceedings, *restrains* and *counteracts* them in one of the very chief of their *pastoral* functions, the guarding against errors and heresies in the Church.

Behold here, Sir, A WOMAN exercising spiritual ecclesiastical authority over *the Man*! Yea, behold *the Representative* of the Clergy of the whole land, a most learned, grave, and venerable body, waiting upon A WOMAN, to learn from her mouth, what *the Church* is to believe, and what to reject, as to this great *mystery of faith*: upon A WOMAN who could be supposed to know as little of this matter as of the motion of the stars; yet, by her *sole* determination, (I repeat it with astonishment, and you hear it, no doubt, with perplexity and grief) *your Church* was uncontrollably and authoritatively directed in this deep and mysterious point.

I ask you, Sir, in the *name of GOD*, Is *this* the constitution and frame of the *Church of CHRIST*? Is it not a *Constitution* of a quite different nature; a Society not *DIVINELY*, but *humanly* instituted; and, therefore, by your own definition, NOT the *Church of Christ*? And may not, think you, a person separate peaceably from it, without any the least danger of thereby separating himself from the one scriptural, apostolic, and catholic Church?

When you stript the *Pope* of his *SUPREMACY*, and gave it to our *Princes*, you should have taken care not to have left his *INFALLIBILITY* behind. An *infallible Head* and Director of the *Church*,

Church, be it *Woman* or *Man*, be it an *He* or a *She-bishop*, is a thing plausible enough, and carries a good face: but, to lodge the absolute direction of the *consciences*, the *faith*, and the *discipline* of the Church with a *fallible Head*! to give a *Prince*, yea a *LADY* bred up in all the softnesses and diversions of a court, an uncontrollable dominion over the religious conduct both of *Clergy* and *Laity*, authoritatively to direct what *those* are to preach, and what *these* to believe as the *doctrine* of *CHRIST*! to make *HER* the *sole Judge* in all controversies which shall arise upon any the most mysterious and inexplicable points; so that *all the Priests* are to *ask knowledge* at *HER lips*; and whatever *SHE* determines is to be received by the Church as *Christian verity* and *truth*! This is such a *Constitution* as quite shocks the understanding, and comes not a whit behind *Transubstantiation* itself. Hence, doubtless, Sir, the triumphs of *Popish Priests* over you! Hence their inroads upon you, and the thousands they are continually carrying captive from your tents! And hence the sad increase, and the insults of *Deists*, who taking the scheme of the *Church of England* to be that of the *Christian Church*, are authorised by common sense, they think, not only to reject, but to treat it with contempt!

And now, Sir, having so largely discussed this point, I presume you are convinced, "*That this same peaceable separation of ours is not, what you call it, a piece of arrant nonsense and contradiction;*" and that you will cease to be so displeased at our treating your grave lectures upon the heinous sin of *SCHISM*, as *solemn Cant*, and *ecclesiastical Scare-crows*. You see, likewise, how extremely unapt, and quite wide of the point, are

the *two instances* you bring to illustrate our case, viz. “ of a wife separating from the bed and board “ of her husband—Or of two or three counties disliking a monarchical government, and throwing off their allegiance to the King *.” Has the *Church of England*, Sir, any such power or authority over us *Dissenters*, as the husband has over the wife? Pray who gave it that authority? Have we ever plighted it our troth? or bound ourselves by a solemn vow to honour and obey it to the end of our life?—Or have we ever sworn allegiance to it; or do we owe it any homage; as *the counties* have sworn and do owe to *the King*?

Amongst the *peculiar excellencies* of your *Church* you reckon “ The use of the *three creeds* in public worship; as one of the most effectual and “ powerful means both for teaching and preserving the Christian faith entire and uncorrupt, “ which we have not in our Churches †.” The *Creed* called *the Apostles*, we have in constant use amongst us: And as for the *two other*, especially the *Athanasian*, we are content you should have the honour of its being *peculiar* to yourselves. But methinks, Sir, it should a little check your triumph over us here, to remember, that some of the wisest and most illustrious members of your Church, both Clergy and Laity, account the use of *this Creed* your great sin and reproach, and with A. B. Tillotson, wish you were well rid of it.

What are you, Sir, amongst the *weak and uncharitable* minds who *damn to the pit of Hell* all who cannot receive all the dark and *mysterious points* set forth in that creed! Do you in your conscience think that there is NO SALVATION for those who do not faithfully believe the several articles

it

* Lett. I. page 72.

† Lett. I. page 5.

it contains; and that *whosoever doth not keep whole and undefiled the faith therein delivered, he shall WITHOUT DOUBT perish everlastingly?* What! the many great and worthy persons, bright ornaments of your own Church, who instead of *keeping it whole and undefiled*, have openly disavowed, preached, and wrote against it, dying in this disbelief, have they *without peradventure everlastingly perished?* Alas! for the good Doctors *Clarke, Whitby, Burnet, &c.* — For the illustrious Sir *Isaac, &c. &c.* Yea, alas! for the whole *Greek Church* who have strenuously rejected the article of the *Filioq;* — They are gone down, it seems to the *infernal pit!* And notwithstanding their great knowledge and piety in this world, are, for not believing the *Athanasian Creed*, sunk into EVERLASTING DARKNESS and DAMNATION in the other! Do you wonder *Deism* prevails, if this be genuine *Christianity?*

'Tis a fact, I presume, indisputable, that a great part of the most learned and virtuous of your Clergy are departed from the *Athanasian doctrine*; and that those of them who are not, do by no means think its belief *absolutely and indispensably necessary* to Salvation. What now must a *Deist* think, when he hears both the one and the other *thirteen* times a year, most solemnly declaring in the presence of *Almighty God*, and as instructors of his people, *that whoever will be saved, it is before all things necessary that he hold the ATHANASIAN faith;* and most *peremptorily denouncing EVERLASTING DAMNATION* upon those who *do not believe it;* that is, many of them denouncing DAMNATION upon *themselves!* — Is this your “*powerful and effectual means of preserving the Christian faith?*” — I should think it one of the *most effectual* to sub-

vert and destroy it. It has no doubt, been in fact a great stumbling-block in the way of *Infidels* and *Jews*; and hardened them in their opposition to the *Religion of CHRIST*, when they see it doomed to *undoubted* and *everlasting* perdition all who do not heartily and sincerely believe (for that must be meant by *faithfully*) these deep and mysterious points, which we acknowledge to be inexplicable, and far above the powers of reason to comprehend.

“ But the Dissenting Ministers, you tell me, who have complied with the terms of the toleration, have solemnly subscribed *the VIIIth article* which approves the *Athanasian Creed* *.” Let Dr. Calamy answer †. “ The Dissenting Ministers about the city, in a body, gave in their sense of the articles when they subscribed them, and among the rest of this VIIIth article, in the gloss upon which, the *damnatory clauses* of this Creed are expressly *excluded* the subscription.— And there was something of the same nature done in several parts of the country.” Now the fathers and predecessors of the present Dissenting Ministers having made this *public* protest and declaration at their subscription, and the *Legislature* having accepted, or at least not rejected it; under the favour of *this protest* their successors may be supposed now to subscribe with the *same disapprobation* of the *damnatory clause*. If it were not to be thus taken, there is, I hope, not a Minister among us but would publickly disown and renounce his subscription.

I should now proceed, Sir, to the examination of other parts of your letters, to shew the great *insufficiency*

* Appendix, page 78.

† Life of Mr. Baxter, page 236.

sufficiency of your arguments and objections; and to observe that, in many instances, you have extremely mistaken and given quite wrong representations of our religious principles and practice. — But I relieve your patience at present. — If this province be undertaken by no other hand, you may in some time, by divine permission, expect to hear farther from,

Sir,

Your very humble Servant,

A DISSENTER.

THE
Dissenting Gentleman's
SECOND
LETTER, &c.

S I R,

TIS with some regret I proceed in vindication of my dissent, as it will constrain me to say some things, which may seem to be disrespectful to *established forms* of worship. But *Self-defence* is a principle which generous minds allow strongly to operate. I highly reverence and esteem, and most heartily rejoice in the great number of illustrious and excellent persons, both *Clergy* and *Laity*, which the Church of *England* can boast. But yet, as the present *established forms* were drawn up when this kingdom just emerg'd out of *Popish* darkness; and as in drawing them up, *especial regard* was had to the *then* weakness of the people, who could not be all at once entirely brought off from the old ceremonies and forms: As there are several parts of our liturgy, and ecclesiastical constitution, which a great number, I apprehend, if not all our *Bishops* and *Clergy*, wish to see altered: And finally, as the alteration of those, and the removing a few things, acknowledged in themselves to be *mutable* and *indifferent*, would heal the *unhappy breach*, and restore the chief part of the Dissenters

ters to the Church.—Upon all these accounts, I may be allowed, I hope, with freedom to make *my defence* against your vigorous attacks; and to represent my objections, and the grounds of my *dissent*, in as strong a light as I am able.

The part of a public *Monitor*, and of my *Instructor* in this affair, which you have *voluntarily* taken on you, will allow me, as I go along, to put you in mind of a great objection or two which Dissenters are wont to urge, but which you have quite overlooked, and to intreat you will direct me how to get over them.

“ We letter-writers, say you, have a privilege
 “ of setting down our thoughts as they offer them-
 “ selves, without scrupulously adhering to strict and
 “ close method *.” This privilege you have indeed with great freedom taken: I shall therefore be indulged the same.

To begin then with your defence of SPONSORS in *Baptism*. It is the opinion of the *Dissenters*, that when an *Infant* is brought to be entered by Baptism into the Family or Church of GOD, and a solemn *vow* and *engagement* is to be made before the Church for its *religious education*; that the *PARENTS*, whose child it is, and to whom both GOD and *Nature* have committed its education; that *those*, I say, are the *proper persons* to stand forth, and take upon them this great and important trust; and to bind themselves by a *solemn vow* faithfully to discharge it. Now our objections to the order and practice of your *Church* are,

I. That in a very arbitrary and strange manner, without the least shadow of authority from *Reason* or *Scripture*, or the *ancient practice* of the Church, you actually SET ASIDE the Parents in this solemnity;

* Lett. III. page 60.

nity; and FORBID them to stand forth, and take upon them this great charge to which GOD hath called them. For your XXIXth canon expressly commands, *That no parent shall be urged to be present at his Child's Baptism, nor BE ADMITTED to answer as Godfather for HIS OWN Child.* And,

2. That you require *other persons* to appear in the *parents* stead, and to take upon them this *important trust*, and most solemnly to promise before GOD, and *the Church*, the performance of that, which few of them ever do, or ever intended to perform; or, perhaps, are ever capable of performing. What now, Sir, is *your answer* to these *objections* of the Dissenters? Why, truly, the *first*, which is indeed the *chief*, you very prudently *slip over*; and attempt not the least apology for *setting aside* the parents; so that you leave us still to consider *this*, as a thing utterly indefensible, unlawful, absurd, and which will admit of no excuse.

But as to the *second*, viz. the *solemn vow and obligation* under which the *Sureties* lay themselves, to this you largely speak; and tell me—"It is a gross mistake to imagine, that the promises there made by the *Sureties* concerning the future faith and practice of the child, are made in their *own name*: As if *they engaged* thereby, that, when it is grown up, it shall actually believe all the articles of the Christian faith, shall renounce the Devil and all his works, &c. Whereas the Church considers *these answers*, as the CHILD'S *answers*, only made by its *Representatives*: they contain ITS part of the baptismal covenant or contract; which, because, by reason of its tender age, it cannot *itself* utter, is utter'd by its

" *Sureties*

“*Sureties*—*.” But if this be, Sir, a *gross mistake*, the most celebrated of *your own writers* have led us into it. “*The Sureties in Baptism*, says your learned Dr. *Nichols* †, *religiously ENGAGE for the faith of the baptised; that they SHALL sincerely believe all that is revealed in the Gospel; and SHALL direct the subsequent actions of their lives by the laws of Christ.*” A cloud of witnesses, I believe, can be brought from the *Doctors* of your Church, whose judgment is the same. But no wonder the Learned differ in so mysterious a point.—You go on and affirm—“That the *Sureties* are, by the Church, considered in this affair, *no otherwise* than as *the mouth* of the child. —You see, Sir, here are *NO promises NOR engagements* which *ANY* besides *the CHILD* are supposed to enter into, and to be bound by. Read over the office of public baptism, you will not find, I assure you, *ANY promises or stipulations* at all made by *the Sureties* in their own name: I mean any that are explicit ‡.” But this account of the matter appears to me extremely dark; and rather greatly to strengthen than remove our objections. For,

FIRST, It represents *the Church* as acting a very extraordinary and unaccountable part; *viz.* as receiving a *child* to baptism, on account of *ITS OWN faith*, and *ITS OWN promise*, uttered by its *Sureties*; when, at the same time, it knows, *the child* neither does nor can, either *promise* or *believe* any more than the font at which 'tis baptised. It considers the child as *ACTUALLY covenanting and contracting*, yea, as the *ONLY* covenanting and con-

* Lett. I. page 31.
page 273.

† Nicho's's Defence, &c. Part II.
‡ Ibid. pages 31, 32.

contracting party in this solemnity, when it knows it to be absolutely *incapable* of either. It represents *the Church* as very solemnly asking *THE CHILD* — *Dost thou believe? Wilt thou be baptized? Dost thou forsake the Devil?* &c. When it is fully persuaded of its *utter inability* to believe, or resolve, or will any thing about it. Now when a *Deist* stands by, and sees a learned and grave Divine thus asking, and talking, and covenanting with a *child*, can you wonder, Sir, if he smiles, and merrily treats the whole transaction as a jest?

“ *The answers, you say, are considered by the Church as ONLY the answers of THE CHILD, and contain ITS part of the baptismal covenant; which because, by reason of its tender age, it cannot itself utter, is to be uttered by its Sureties:* ” That is to say, the child *thinks*, but cannot *speak*: it really *covenants, contracts, promises*, but not being able by reason of its tender age to *utter* its good intentions, these *Sureties* are its *mouth* to utter them for it. But why, good Sir, its *mouth* to speak for it; and not its *understanding* also to think for it; its *will* to promise for it; and indeed its *soul*, and its *very self*, to covenant and contract for it? Is not *the child*, by reason of its tender age, as absolutely incapable of *covenanting*, as 'tis of *uttering*; of *contracting*, as 'tis of *speaking*? If the *Surety* therefore does *one* of these good offices for it, he undoubtedly does *the other* also. But,

SECONDLY. If there be, as you say, *no promises NOR engagements which ANY besides THE CHILD are supposed to enter into, or to be bound by*, the consequence is extreamly plain, that then there are no promises nor engagements entered into *at all*, for its *religious education*. For *the child* surely, does not *engage* for its *own* religious education. If
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the *Sureties* therefore do not enter into any promise of this kind, it evidently follows, that there are no express engagements entered into by *any* for the child's education. And thus, behold, your boasted *double security*, turns out at last *no security* at all! But, a *Surety* not bound! a *Sponsor* promising *nothing*! a *Security* unengaged! This is language, Sir, in the *mercantile*, whatever it may be in the *scholastic* way of life, absolutely unintelligible. And to retort your own instance; my Lawyer I should think a very wrong-headed man, who should pretend to lend my money upon a *double security*, and make a merit of so doing, when at the same time he confessed, there were *NO promises*, *NOR engagements*, by which *either* of the *Securities* were *explicitly bound*.

To be plain, Sir; as for this business of a *child's* believing, promising, covenanting by *representative* or *proxy*, I cannot but think a gentleman of your penetration, will easily perceive it to be a thing absolutely inexplicable, impossible, and absurd; a thing utterly repugnant to reason and common sense, and without the least shadow of foundation in the *Christian* religion. For if by the constitution of the gospel covenant, a child may *believe* by proxy, *repent* by proxy, *vow*, *promise*, and *contract* by proxy, he may also, no doubt, *be saved* by proxy, or *be damned* by proxy. But, into what a jest will this turn the religion of *Christ*?

As for the *antiquity* of this practice, *Sponsors in Baptism*, you have the good sense and ingenuity not to pretend it was ever known, or so much as thought of, in the primitive *apostolic* Church. *Tertullian*, who lived about *anno Dom. 200*, is the *first*, I apprehend, of all *Christian* writers, that makes
any

any mention of them. Nor does it at all follow from what *he* says, that these *Sponsors* were any other than *the Parents* of the child. *Justin Martyr* who wrote fifty years before him, when he particularly describes the method and form of *Christian Baptism* in his days, says not a *single word* of any such persons *.

But we learn from *St. Austin*, about the year 390 (one of the earliest of *Christian* writers, in which any mention of them is found) *when*, and upon *what* occasion, these *Sponsors* were admitted.

“ A great many, says he, are offered to Baptism,

“ not by their parents, but by others; as *infant-*

“ *slaves* are sometimes offered by their masters.

“ And sometimes when the parents are dead, the

“ infants are baptised, being offered by any, who

“ can afford to shew this compassion to them. And

“ sometimes infants whom their parents have cru-

“ elly exposed, to be brought up by those who

“ light on them, are now and then taken up by

“ the holy virgins, and offered to Baptism by them

“ who have no children of their own, nor design

“ to have any.”—These are † *Austin's* words.

Observe now *Dr. Wall's* ‡ ingenuous confession on them (and the good Doctor you know, Sir, was never partial in favour of Dissenters, but a severe

remarker on them :) “ *Here we see the ORDINARY*

“ *use then was for PARENTS to answer*

“ *for the children: But yet that this was not count-*

“ *ed SO NECESSARY, as that a child could not*

“ *be baptised without it.*”

Hence then it is, plain, that *Parents* never were set aside, when they were capable and willing to offer

* Vid. Lord King's Enquiry, Part II. pages 67, 68.
ad Bonifac.

† Hist. Inf. Bap. Vol. I. page 156.

‡ Epist.

offer their children ; and that only in cases of *Parents* incapacity, were *Sponsors* admitted : And in all *such cases*, Dissenters also use them. Why now, I beseech you, Sir, in defiance of this acknowledged usage and practice of the *ancient Church*, as well as of *common sense*, does *your Church* severely decree, “ That NO PARENT shall be urged to be PRESENT at his Child’s Baptism, nor be ADMITTED to answer as Godfather for it ? ” What ! would the Parents standing forth together with the Sponsors, and promising jointly with them, at all detract from this solemnity, or render it less effectual, to secure the child’s religious education ? It is most evident it would not, and that your practice in this point is undoubtedly an *innovation* ; an unreasonable, absurd, and arbitrary *deviation* from the usage and institution of the primitive *apostolic Church* ; an *absurdity* very generally acknowledged, and complained of, by the members of *your Church*, though not attempted to be reformed.

“ But by *this institution* of godfathers and godmothers, you say, your Church affords its members some *great and special advantages* towards growing in grace and goodness, *above* what are found amongst us : ” and you tell me, “ you lay a great stress upon it, as a *wise, an useful, and necessary* institution * . ” — But did you not consider, Sir, that you were here *highly reflecting* upon the wisdom and goodness, not of the *holy Apostles* only, but of your *great Lawgiver* JESUS CHRIST ? These SPECIAL ADVANTAGES for growth in goodness and holiness, how came it to pass that the great *Founders* of the *Christian Church* never happened to think of them ? You do not pretend it to be an *institution* of JESUS CHRIST’s, and

* Lett. I. pages 58, 59.

and yet are not afraid to call it a *wise*, an *useful*, and even a NECESSARY institution. Strange! that CHRIST, in whom were *hid all the treasures of wisdom*, and who loved the Church so as to *lay down his life for it*, should not *know* this institution to be so *especially advantageous* to the growing goodness of his Church; or that knowing it to be so, he should *unkindly* omit it; and that we are obliged to the *superior* wisdom and goodness of *after ages* for supplying this defect. It has usually been thought, that the *Apostles* declared the *WHOLE counsel of God*; and *kept back NOTHING from the Church which was profitable* to it; and that the *Scriptures* are a *perfect rule*; but this, it seems, is not true; you have discovered it, Sir, to be *not true*: For here you shew us a *wise*, an *useful*, and a NECESSARY institution, which they really *kept back*: and which, had it not been for the *sagacity* of their successors, the Church had been so unhappy as never to have known. Into what mazes men plunge themselves, when they deviate from the truth!

Of the same *temerity* you are guilty, Sir, when treating of *another institution* of your Church, CONFIRMATION, and glorying over us in its want. “Another administration of our Church is *confirmation*; this you know you have wholly discarded: and surely you will be obliged to acknowledge you have lost thereby a *very great advantage*—greatly conducive to future holiness of life*.” Yes, Sir, this we will freely own, when you also will acknowledge, that you are *wiser* than the *Apostles*; and can better judge what is *conducive to holiness*, and for the *advantage of the Church*, than its great Lawgiver JESUS CHRIST. Had this ceremony of *Confirmation* been

* Lett. I. page 61.

been really of *great advantage*, and *conducive to holiness*, it is very strange that neither CHRIST, nor his *Apostles*, should have *ordained* it. That it is an *apostolic* institution, you have not so much as *attempted* to prove; unless *Calvin's* conjecture must be admitted as proof.

The text usually urged for it, (*Acts* viii. 14.) I presume you are fully sensible has *no weight*. *Peter's* and *John's* going down to *Samaria* to pray, and lay their hands on those whom *Philip* had baptised, is, surely, no precedent, no direction, no institution nor command for our *Bishops* to do likewise. For the end for which the *Apostles* did it, 'tis expressly said (ver. 15, 17.) was, *that they might receive the HOLY GHOST, i. e.* its miraculous gifts; and they prayed for them, and laid their hands on them, and they received the HOLY GHOST. That it was his *miraculous gifts* (such as prophesying, speaking with tongues, &c.) to form them into a Church, cannot be disputed; because, they were something *visible*, and obvious to *sense*; something which struck the wonder and ambition of the wicked *Sorcerer*; for 'tis said, when *SIMON* saw that thro' laying on of the *Apostles* hands the HOLY GHOST was given, he offered them money.—Besides, as *Dr. Whitby* justly observes, if they laid not their hands on all who were baptised, it makes nothing for *Confirmation*; if they did, then *Simon Magus* also was confirmed, and received the *Holy Ghost*: which you will by no means admit.

It was to give then to the newly baptised converts at *Samaria* the miraculous gifts of the *Holy Ghost*, that *Peter* and *John* went and laid their hands on them. But do our *Bishops*, Sir, pretend that, by their praying and laying on of hands, the HOLY GHOST is given? Do they not disclaim
any

any powers of this kind? Seeing then they make no pretensions to *the end*, why with such solemnity do we see them practising *the means*? Might they not as well stretch themselves upon the dead body of a child, in imitation of *Elisba*; or, make ointment with spittle for the cure of the blind, in imitation of *our Saviour*; or, anoint the sick with oil, in imitation of the *apostolic Elders*; as pray and lay their hands on those who were baptised, in imitation of *Peter* and *John*, who did this to the *Samaritan* converts ONLY, that they might receive the miraculous gifts and powers of the *Holy Ghost*?

“ As for the open and solemn renewal of the baptismal covenant before GOD and many witnesses, which, you say, baptised persons ought to make, when they come to years of discretion:” This they make with us, in the *other Sacrament* of the Supper; which *Christ* himself has appointed, and which is the *only* institution his wisdom has thought fit to appoint, for this purpose.

But if you will suffer me to *speake freely*, Sir, this ceremony of *confirmation*, as 'tis at present appointed and practised in your Church, to me appears so far from being *greatly conducive to holiness of life*, as that I wish it may not be conducive to a quite different, and a very noxious effect: even to *cherish* in mens minds a *presumptuous* and *false hope*; and to *delude* them into *wrong notions* as to the safety of their state, and as to the *terms* of acceptance and favour with GOD.

By the order of your *Common Prayer*, “ ALL persons baptised, when they come to competent years, and are able to say the Lord's Prayer, Creed, and Ten Commandments, and the Answers
“ of

“ *of the short Catechism, are to be brought to CON-*
 “ *FIRMATION.*” The Bishop having asked,
 “ *Whether they renew the solemn promise and vow*
 “ *which was made in their names in Baptism,*” &c.
 Upon their answer *we do*, proceeds hereupon to
 declare in the most solemn manner, even in an
address to GOD himself, that He has vouchsafed to
regenerate these his Servants by water and the HOLY
GHOST (note: not by water only, but also by the
HOLY GHOST) and to give them the forgiveness of
 ALL THEIR SINS: And laying his hand upon
 the head of each particular person, he CERTIFIES
him by that sign of GOD's favour and gracious good-
ness towards him.

I pray you, Sir, in the *name of GOD*, inform
 me, what warrant has *the Bishop* to pronounce a
 man's *sins ALL forgiven*, and himself *regenerated*
by the HOLY GHOST, upon no other grounds
 than his being able to say the short Catechism, and
 declaring that he stands by his baptismal engage-
 ments? Will you say that this is the *Christian doc-*
trine concerning the terms of acceptance and for-
 giveness with GOD? Are good vows and resolu-
 tions, declared in the Church, infallible or proper
 proofs of a regeneration by the *Holy Ghost*? Is a
 man's *professing* that he repents, and *promising* that
 he will live godly, that *actual repentance* and *a-*
mendment of life which *alone* can ensure the divine
 pardon and favour? Are there not multitudes
 who *call CHRIST their LORD*, and publicly
 profess to stand by their baptismal covenant, whom
 yet he will reject with abhorrence at last? You
 will inform me then, Sir, how his *Lordship*, upon
 this mere profession and promise, *presumes* to de-
 clare to *Almighty GOD*, and to ASSURE the per-
 son, that he is regenerated, forgiven, and with-
 out

out all peradventure in a state of favour with Heaven!

The expressions, you must acknowledge, are couched in absolute and strong terms: nor do I find that there is any intimation, that their forgiveness depends upon their care to *keep*, and to *live up to*, their baptismal engagements. No: but though their *whole life* hath hitherto been scandalously corrupt; yet upon their being able to *say the Lord's Prayer*, &c. the Bishop solemnly pronounces a most *absolute pardon* over them; appeals to *Almighty GOD* that he hath forgiven them *all* their sins; and lest this should be too little to satisfy the *doubting* sinner, and quash his upbraiding conscience, he lays his hand upon his head, and *CERTIFIES him by THAT SIGN of God's favour and goodness to him.*

This *Bishop*, Sir, the multitudes, who come to be confirmed, are taught to consider as an *Ambassador of CHRIST*, a *Successor of the Apostles*, and a *special Minister of GOD*: When they hear then, this *sacred person*, so solemnly declaring that they are fully justified, pardoned, and regenerated by the *Holy Ghost*, can you blame them if they *believe it*; and rest satisfied that their souls are in a *safe and happy state*? And as full remission of sins, and the favour of *GOD*, are to be had on such *easy terms*; can you wonder, should you see thousands eagerly flocking from all quarters to accept it? Or that persons of very vile and profligate characters should often thrust themselves in to partake of this benefit; and be seen receiving upon their knees *episcopal absolution*, and *solemn assurances of GOD's favour and grace*?

You know the aptness of mankind, Sir, to deceive themselves with *false hopes*; and to substitute
good

good purposes, professions, and vows, in the place of real repentance and amendment of life : and you know this, Sir, (and have no doubt often declared it from your pulpit) to be one of the *chief hindrances* of mens becoming truly good. Now should your office for *Confirmation* be found thus powerfully and directly tending to *cherish* these false hopes; you must excuse me if I then should think *it* so far from *CONDUCTING to holiness of life*, as that in my conscience I should believe it to be rather *greatly OBSTRUCTIVE to it*; and extremely *delusive* and *injurious* to the souls of men.

Let me further ask you, Sir, on this head—Is it any breach of charity, to suppose, that amongst the *vast crowds* which present themselves on such occasions, there are often *many*, whom GOD, who knows their hearts, knows to be persons of a corrupt and wicked mind, and to be still under the power and tyranny of sin? Can the *good Bishop* himself, in any judgment of charity, suppose there are not *some* such amongst the *thousands* he confirms? Candidly tell me then, Sir, upon what grounds he *absolutely*, and *without reserve*, declares to the *ETERNAL GOD* concerning them *ALL*, that he hath *fully forgiven these his servants*, when GOD at that time knows many of them *not* to be his servants, and that he hath not at all forgiven them? Or, lays his hand on *each individual* person to assure him of GOD's *favour*, and of his *regeneration by the HOLY GHOST*; when, in truth, some of those he thus assures are absolute and entire *strangers* to the renewing influences of GOD's *spirit*, and fast bound in their sins? To me, Sir, I assure you, this appears, I do not say a very shocking, but I must say a very unaccountable solemnity; and should be glad to know how to re-

reconcile it to the *reverence* you owe to GOD; or to the faithfulness and charity due to the *souls* of men.

Near akin to *this*, but of a yet more obnoxious nature, is another office of your *Common Prayer*. The ABSOLUTION *of the sick*. To *this* you know, Sir, *Dissenters* have always strongly objected, as too much resembling the *solemn tricks* of the Church of *Rome*; by which they pretend to send men to Heaven, without real amendment and holiness of life. But *this* you very prudently pass over in *perfect silence*: for what indeed could so ingenious an advocate offer, on so extremely absurd and indefensible a point?

Being come to the *sick person*, (no matter *what* or *how wicked* his former life hath been) the *Priest* is directed, after some pious exhortations, to examine, “ *Whether he believes the articles of the Apostles Creed; and truly repent him of his sins; and be in charity with all the world: And to move him to make a special confession of his sins, if he feels his conscience troubled with any weighty matter.*” After which confession, the *Priest* is ordered to ABSOLVE him (if he humbly and heartily desire it) *after this sort*.

Our LORD JESUS CHRIST, who hath left power to his Church to ABSOLVE all sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive thee thine offences: And by the AUTHORITY committed to ME, I ABSOLVE thee from ALL THY SINS, in the name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST. Amen.

The form is extremely solemn, Sir, and the matter of the last importance. You had need therefore be sure you go upon good grounds, lest

you be found to trifle with the *name of God*, and in things of *everlasting* moment, and to acquit those whom he abhors. Permit me, Sir, in this *great name*, and before the world, to demand of you,

1. *What Church* is it, and *where* is the Church found, to whom CHRIST has left this high authority and power? Is it the Church of *England*, the Church of *Scotland*, the Church of *France*, or the Church of *Rome*? Do you here mean by *the Church*, what your XIXth article hath defined it, viz. *The congregation of the faithful*?—Or, do you understand it as in your XXth article, where it is said to have *power to decree rites, and authority in matters of faith*? If so, I have shewn in my former Letter, that *the Church* is no other than the *King and Parliament* of these realms. The *King*, indeed, has power to absolve all manner of sinners, penitent or not penitent; and by a single *Act of Grace*, to vacate and set aside the censures and excommunications of all the *Bishops, Archbishops, and Clergy* of the land, and to restore the offender to the Church's bosom again. To *absolve*, not in *Foro Civili* only, but in *Foro Ecclesiæ*; not in the *State* only, but also in the *Church*. But whether the *Kings or Queens of England* do this by authority derived to them from CHRIST? Whether *that Church* of which THEY are declared the supreme Heads, be *the Church* to whom this high power is given? And whether THEY, as *Heads* of it, have not *this power* dwelling capitally, supremely, and principally in them; so as that, what THEY loose on earth, is as certainly loosed in Heaven, as any thing that is loosed by any inferior members who officiate in the Church under them —These, Sir, are high points, which without your

your assistance, I shall not presume to settle. Be so good, Sir, as to let us know, WHAT CHURCH *upon earth* it is, to whom CHRIST hath delegated this important AUTHORITY; and WHERE the charter or grant is found, by which he gave it the commission? But

2. That CHRIST hath ^{not} given, can give, no such AUTHORITY to *fallible uninspired* men. I should think absolutely out of doubt. Because if he hath given power to any AUTHORITY to *absolve those who are truly penitent*, he must also have given them power TO KNOW *who are truly penitent*. Else 'tis a power to do nothing, for till they *know* them to be truly penitent (*i. e.* till they can *search their hearts*) they cannot *authoritatively* absolve them: But if they cannot do it till then, they cannot do it *at all*. Besides,

3. If the Priest has really from CHRIST this authority and power, the manner in which he is here ordered to apply it, is most certainly *wrong*. For upon the sinner's *confessing* his faults, and *professing* his faith and sincere repentance, the Priest is ordered most *solemnly* and *authoritatively* to absolve him. But are any promises or professions which a sinner makes in that distress, a *proper ground* for such an absolute authoritative absolution? Are not the most profligate, when *death* is thought to approach, wont to feel their conscience troubled with many *weighty matters*, ready to confess their sins, to express the deepest remorse, and to vow amendment if spared? But when the danger is past, is there one of a thousand that remembers his vows, and that returns not to his sins with as keen an appetite as ever? Do not you gentlemen of the *Clergy*, loudly complain of this, when you press to *present* repentance, and warn us,

not to trust to the sorrows of a sick bed ? But notwithstanding all this, when the *sick sinner* sends for you, confesses his sins, professes repentance, and desires absolution, you are directed and required with all possible solemnity, even *in the name of the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST*, *authoritatively to absolve him from ALL his crimes*, how many or great soever they have been, and to declare him *fully forgiven*. Strange ! That you can presume in the name of the *sacred Trinity*, to ASSURE a man that he is *absolved* from all his sins, when at the same time you *know* yourselves NOT SURE that he is absolved ! Yea, when the *only grounds* of your doing it, are but the same *signs of repentance* which a thousand sinners give, who are nevertheless held fast under the power and guilt of sin ! What would you call that man, Sir, who in a court of human judicature, should *most solemnly* affirm, and declare in the *name of God*, an *important fact* to be done, which yet at the same time he is *not sure* is done ; or who should call Heaven to witness to the *certainty* of that, which he is not *at all* certain of ? But is it less dangerous, or less reproachful, thus to trifle and collude in *eternal* things than in *temporal* ; in the court of *Almighty God*, than in that of the *King* ?

I cannot say, Sir, in what light you view this order of your Church, nor what obedience you pay it, but am humbly of opinion, that 'tis this *straining* the *sacerdotal* character, which has sunk it into some contempt ; and that if it continues thus *strained*, lower, much lower, 'twill continue to sink. For when men see you claiming from God, *awful* and *high* powers, which they are sure God has never given you ; and hear you with great

great solemnity *authoritatively* absolving in the name of the *Holy Trinity*, when at the same time they know the *Holy Trinity* never gave you *any authority* so to do, how natural is it for them to deride the *priestly character* on which these claims are founded, and to treat your other offices with ridicule and disrespect?

And now, Sir, having presented you with some of the *true grounds* of our dissent, many of which you have not at all, and the rest but slightly touched, in you *three* long Letters, I proceed to your attempts to *reflect back* our own pleas and objections upon ourselves, and to prove us *self-condemned*.

Here you complain — “ that you walk almost “ without light—that our Churches are so secret “ in all their ways, that there is scarce any know- “ ing what they are—that you must grope and feel “ for them as in the dark—and that you are some- “ thing like one fighting with a ghost *.” This seems, indeed, a very just description of your case, for you greatly misrepresent both our *principles* and our *practice*. But the blame of *this darkness*, Sir, be wholly to yourself. Are not our Churches *open*? Our prayers, our sermons, our sacraments, and ordinations performed in view of the world, that whoever pleases may come and see our manner in them?

But “ we have no common rules of discipline “ and worship, by which we hold ourselves obliged “ to walk; at least none made public and laid “ before the world, for your examination and dis- “ cussion †.” Yes, Sir, we have an excellent
COMMON RULE *of discipline and worship*, by
C 3 which

* Lett. II. page 4.

† Ibid.

which all our Churches *hold themselves obliged to walk*, even the same which CHRIST and his Apostles, the great founders of the Christian Church, originally drew up, published, and established for it; and which they left as a *common rule*, the ONLY common rule, and a PERFECT common rule, for the use of all future ages, *viz.* the HOLY SCRIPTURES: *This* therefore you may discuss with all the freedom you please.

But to descend to some of the many instances in which you much *misrepresent* us. Your very great mistake, as to our *imposing* SITTING at the Lord's-supper, I have shewn in my former Letter. You farther affirm—"That it is *generally* held amongst us, that the sacrament is for none but perfect and consummate Christians, such as can give a particular account of their conversion *." Here you walk, Sir, *without light*. There is not a single Church, I am persuaded, amongst the Dissenters in the whole kingdom, hardly a single person, who hath *this notion* of the sacrament. We universally hold, that every sincere Christian has a right to the Lord's-table.

"As to the duty of *fasting*, you say, if you are not *mightily deceived*, it is thrown away amongst us. You have not met with any sermons or treatises of our ministers, shewing the obligations, and pressing its practice upon the people; nor have you ever heard of its being practised, even by the strictest and devoutest amongst us †." You are *mightily deceived*, Sir, a great deal too mightily, for one who sets up for so severe a censor of his brethren. Amongst many others, I refer you only to a most excellent discourse on *fasting*, in *Bennet's Christian Oratory*, Vol.

* Lett. I. page 52.

† Lett. I. pages 65, 66.

Vol. II. which I am sure you cannot read without admiring it, blushing, and condemning your own temerity.

You are pleased to give us also a very *grave* and *severe* reprehension for *standing*, and not *kneeling* at our public prayers; and say, “ It is little less “ than *imposed* upon our people, insomuch, that “ should any one *presume* to kneel in our “ Churches, we should *certainly* censure and condemn him for it *.—That *your Church* has as “ good right to impose *kneeling* in the public worship upon her members, as *Dissenters* have to “ *impose* it upon their children and servants in “ their *family* devotions †.—And that we *ALL* “ *WAYS* practise it in *private* ‡.” You are extremely unhappy, Sir, in your intelligence about this *strange* people, whom you have taken upon you to *reprehend*. How came you to know, what their posture of worship *always* is in *PRIVATE*? Have they taken you into their *closets*? For my own part, I pretend not to have been much with them at their secret devotions, and therefore will not *pronounce* with *such assurance* as you do upon the point; but am very strongly persuaded they practise *variously* in this matter, and do not *always* kneel.

As to their *Families* and *Churches*, though I have been present at *prayers* in a great number of both, (which you, I presume, Sir, never have been) I assure you, I never once saw nor heard any thing like *the impositions* you mention. In their *family* devotions some *stand*; and some *kneel*, according as their inclination and convenience

C 4.

serves.

* Lett. II. pages 65, 67.
II. page 68.

† Lett. J. page 28.

‡ Lett.

serves. And in their *public assemblies*, many kneel at prayer, I believe, the whole kingdom over, without it ever entering into the thoughts of their *fellow-worshippers*, to take the least offence thereat.

You tell me “ you can name a considerable congregation amongst us, which is greatly scandalized—and has taken a great and general offence, at one of its members kneeling at public prayer *.” But as in many other points, Sir, ’tis very *notorious* you have been *ill served* by your *informers*, as to our customs and worship; you must give me leave to think, that they have *here* also made *too free* with your credulity. That we have *weak* brethren amongst us, and those not a few, I am very ready to own. But a congregation, a *considerable* congregation too, so weak as to take a *great* and *general* offence at such a trifle as this! You must excuse me, if I cannot easily admit it. I think you will do justice, Sir, to *name* the congregation, that it may either *purge* itself of the reproach, or stand *corrected* before the world, for its *unchristian* and *imposing* temper; and learn to act more consistent with that *liberty* and *right* of private judgement, which as *Dissenters* they profess.

No, Sir, *Dissenters* are not for *binding*, where GOD has *left free*. They are *our brethren* of another Church, who think themselves capable of *mending* CHRIST’S *institutions*; and not content to use them in the *plainness* and *simplicity* in which DIVINE WISDOM left them, must needs *embellish* and *improve* them by *additions* of their own.

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These *additions* of your own, for instance, **KNEELING** at public prayers, you are so surprisingly *sanguine* as to represent as “ a great improvement of public worship, and as adding a “ *natural splendor and beauty* to it—that our worship is *debased* for want of it—that *kneeling* is a “ *more* humble and honourable posture——*much* “ *more* expressive of our profound reverence of “ **GOD**.——And the humble posture of *kneeling*, “ **NATURE** itself so plainly dictates, and so “ powerfully prompts us to, that a man, if he “ were left to himself, whenever — he makes “ his requests known to **GOD**, will hardly do it “ in any other——unless when some *affected restraint* is laid upon him *.” How towering a flight! You do not pretend to say, that either **CHRIST** or *his Apostles*, ever enjoined, or constantly, or mostly, *used* **KNEELING** at public prayer; you mention several instances from *Scripture*, where **STANDING** was the posture of some of the *most solemn* addresses to *Almighty GOD*.——*Abraham* **STOOD** before the Lord †, when he offered up that humble intercession for *Sodom*. Of the *Levites* and *all the Priests*, ’tis particularly recorded, that they **STOOD UP**; and all the people are also called upon to **STAND UP**, and *blest the Lord their GOD*, in that solemn address to Heaven, *Nehem.* ix. 2, 3, 4, 5. An address of deep humiliation, confession, deprecation, and covenanting with **GOD**, one of the *most solemn* that stands upon sacred record; ’tis here no less than *four* several times expressly mentioned, that **STANDING** was the posture in which their worship was offered up. *Moses* and *Samuel* are represented as **STANDING** before **GOD**, when making their most humble and

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* Lett. II. pages 66, 67, 69, 73.

† Gen. xviii. 22.

importunate intercessions with him, *Jer. xv. 1.* When our SAVIOUR in his parable represents *two men praying in the Temple*, **STANDING** is the posture in which he describes them, *Luke xviii. 10, 11.* Yea, himself in express words has, if not actually enjoined, yet most fully declared his approbation of this gesture, *Mark xi. 25.* *When ye STAND praying, forgive.* Finally, when the primitive Christians, it is acknowledged on all hands, every Lord's day, and at all other times betwixt *Easter and Whitsuntide*, universally prayed **STANDING**, and **NEVER** *kneeled* at their public devotions. (Consequently, by the way, not at the *Lord's-supper.*) "*Die Dominica nefas ducimus, &c.*" says *Tertullian* *: *On the LORD'S-DAY we account it A SIN to worship KNEELING; which custom we also observe from Easter to Whitsuntide.*" — With all this evidence glaring full in your face, Sir, you have the assurance, shall I call it, or does it deserve some other name, very smartly to reprehend us for **STANDING** at our public prayers; and to call it a debasement of our worship—to affirm that *kneeling* is a **MORE** humble and honourable posture—**MUCH MORE** expressive of our profound Reverence of **GOD**—A great IMPROVEMENT of public Worship, and that it adds a natural **BEAUTY** and **SPLENDOR** to it—Surprisingly enthusiastic! What *Abraham*, and *Moses*, and *Samuel*, and *Nehemiah*, and all the *Priests*, and *Jewish people*, **DEBASE** the divine worship, when they **STOOD** before **GOD**, and made their solemn addresses to him! Yea, what **CHRIST** himself too *debase* it, by directing men to **STAND** praying!

Had

* De Coron. Milit. page 340,

Had you happened, Sir, to have been of the Council of *the Apostles*, you could have helped them to establish *Christian worship* upon a greatly improved, a more beautiful and perfect plan; and have INJOINED this MORE humble and honourable posture, this ADDITIONAL splendour and beauty to public prayer, which it never came into their minds to INJOIN the Disciples.—But as our Bibles at present stand; and GOD and *Jesus Christ* have left us at full liberty to offer up our prayers either *standing* or *kneeling*; you will excuse us if we are not so struck with your *additional beauty* as to give ourselves up blindfold to its charms.

But it seems we are *inconsistent*, in condemning some of your ceremonies, when at the same time we readily conform ourselves to others: Yea, have many ceremonies allowed and practised amongst ourselves. “Such, you aver, we have, tho’ we seem not to know it: Such as uncovering our head when we enter either your Churches, or our own Meetings*.” But you are still “*walking in the dark*,” Sir, as you justly represent yourself, “and *encountering with ghosts*.” The Dissenters have no such custom of *uncovering their heads* when they enter into their *Meeting-Places*, unless in time of worship; no notion of paying reverence to *timber and walls*; no Ministers amongst them who have *sense or grace* enough to *consecrate* a piece of ground: And when they use this ceremony at entering your Churches, ’tis, I assure you, purely as a *civil*, not at all as a *religious* ceremony; a compliment paid, not in the least to the building, but entirely to our good brethren, whom we would not needlessly offend.

“*Kneel*—

" *Kneeling at Ordination,*" the next ceremony you mention, tho' generally used amongst us, was never I believe *imposed*. If the person to be ordained scrupled *that posture*, he would, without all doubt, be permitted to *stand*.

As for "the *secret ceremonies* which you *suspect*, but will not positively affirm, to pass at striking the covenant betwixt us and our Pastors," which you once and again mention, let your *suspensions* on that head, Sir, give you no further pain. I assure you I neither know, nor have ever heard of any such *covenanting* now practised amongst us: And am persuaded, that of all our Churches, not one in five hundred observe any such thing.

"In balance against your *surplice* you put, what you call, the ceremony of our *long sweeping Cloak* *." But the least attention would have shewn the *two cases* to be far from *parallel*. Our Ministers are at full liberty either to *use* or *disuse* the *one*: Are yours *so* as to the *other*? Did you ever hear of any learned pious *pastors* amongst us silenced, rejected, and cruelly imprisoned for refusing the *sweeping cloak*? But, have you never heard of your *Hoopers, Sampsons, Humpherys*, and an hundred other Ministers, men of distinguished learning and usefulness in *your Church*, who have been *swept* from their stations in it; silenced, confined, and grievously harrassed, *only* for scrupling your *Surplice* and *cap*? Have you never heard of *many Churches* forsaken, and shut up in *London*, and of numerous congregations, both in city and country, deprived for a long while of sacraments and public worship, by the rigorous imposition of *your habits* on their *Ministers*? And if the most

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celebrated divine was now to offer to officiate in any of your Churches, but refused to wear a *surplice*, must he not, by your *canons*, be set aside and refused? Had *our cloak* been the occasion of a thousandth part of the distractions and confusions in the Church, as *your surplice* has been, and swept so many worthy persons from their ministry and livings in it; we should have had the grace, I hope, soon to treat it as a *besome of destruction*, and to have doomed it to the flames.

But “the giving the *Christian-name* in baptism “to the person baptised, you very seriously urge “as another solid argument of *ceremonies* amongst “us,” and ask, “Is it not an *addition* to the sacrament? Is it not an *imposition*?” You add, “Now I see you smile *.” Excuse me, Sir, I could not help it! your argument is quite *new*, and really surprised me with its solidity and weight. Yes, Sir, I own it an *addition*, an *imposition*, and a very *ridiculous* one too. And should any Minister of ours pretend to *add*, or to *impose*, this ceremony upon his people; and forbid them to call the child by *its name* till it was baptised; you may be assured he would soon meet with the disregard and contempt his impertinence deserved. When you baptise *adult* persons, do you *give* their names in that ceremony? Or do you not *only* call them by names *before* given? The same, I apprehend, is the case as to *children* amongst us.

As for the *ceremonies in marriage*; these, you justly observe, we consider only as *civil* ceremonies, and the Priest as a *civil officer*, appointed by the Magistrate to officiate in this affair. And whatever *decent rites* the Magistrate prescribes in matters of a *civil* nature, we think it our duty reverently

verently to observe. But, “ the Magistrate prescribe !” you with astonishment reply. “ For God’s sake how does the Magistrate here prescribe the rites and ceremonies of *marriage*, more than the *other* rites and ceremonies of the Church * !” But could not a gentleman of your discernment perceive a difference here ? Is the form of *marriage* any where *instituted* by our SAVIOUR ; or a part of *Christian worship* ; as baptism and the Lord’s-supper are ? May we not therefore own the power of the *civil Magistrate* to appoint *rites* and *forms* for the celebration of the one, but not so as to the *other* ? By prescribing rites of *marriage*, the Magistrate acts in character, and rules in *his own kingdom* : but by *authoritatively* prescribing rites in *baptism* and the *Lord’s-supper*, we humbly apprehend, he extends beyond the sphere assigned him by GOD, and attempts to rule in CHRIST’S kingdom : and that therefore here we are to obey GOD, rather than man.

You farther ask with surprize—“ What civil ceremonies in the Church of GOD ! in the midst of the administration of a divine institution : intermixed with pastoral exhortations, holy prayers, solemn benedictions †.”——But why, Sir, so astonished ? Did you never take an OATH in a civil court of judicature ? And did not the person who administered this SACRED rite, give you a *pastoral exhortation*, accompanied with an *holy prayer*, and a *solemn benediction*, piously invoking on you GOD’S blessing and help ? And as to the PLACE, which you call the Church of GOD, where *marriage* is solemnized ; you might have pleased to remember, that the *consecration* of timber, and the *sanctity* of walls, is a point too sublime

* Lett. III. page 6.

† Ibid.

time for *Dissenters* understandings; and that in their opinion all places are alike holy, and that no building on earth merits the high honour of being called the *Church of God*.

The same reply we make as to the *ceremonies of burial*, our compliance with which you also briskly retort upon us. Is *burial of the dead*, Sir, a *CHRISTIAN institution*? Any part of the religion or worship of *Christ*? Is it not purely a *political or civil thing*? Yes; and as such *only* we view it: and consider the person who officiates, as one appointed to this office, *directed, instructed, and maintained* by the *STATE*.

But as you are here professedly “*answering our great and popular objections*,” how came you, Sir, to slide over, in consummate silence, one of the *greatest and most popular*, to this *office of burial*? which, indeed, is not *ours* only, but an objection of some of the most illustrious members of your own Church. Were you conscious the *objected passages* were incapable of defence, and therefore prudently let them drop?

There are but *three cases*, you know, Sir, in which your Church *refuses* this solemn *office of burial*, viz. to those who die unbaptised, to self-murderers, and to those who are under sentence of the greater excommunication. As for *all other persons* which are brought to the church-yard, it very strictly *commands* you, even under pain of *suspension*, by *canon LXVIII*, that you use over them the form prescribed by the *Common-Prayer*. Now, hence it comes to pass, that over some of the most *abandoned and profligate* of mankind; over men who have been cut down in a course of open impiety by a sudden and untimely death; or who even fell by the hand of *Justice* for some black and
atrocious

atrocious crime ; over *these*, I say, your Church, and I say it with astonishment, directs and commands you most solemnly to declare, *That almighty GOD of his GREAT MERCY has taken to himself the soul of this your dear brother.* You give GOD hearty thanks that it hath pleased him to deliver him out of the miseries of this sinful world : And you pray GOD, that when you yourselves shall depart out of this life, you may REST IN CHRIST, as your HOPE is this your brother doth. This is what your Church commands you solemnly to say over EVERY person brought to be buried, the three cases above excepted. So that if the man happened to be killed in the very act of committing murder, adultery, or a rape : Or for either of these crimes dies upon the gallows an impenitent hardened wretch, whom vengeance suffered not to live ; yet concerning him you are to declare, that *Almighty GOD hath in GREAT MERCY taken him to himself* : Tho' he died a victim to public justice, and was taken away in wrath. You are to give GOD hearty thanks, that he hath taken this your BROTHER out of the miseries of this sinful world : Tho' you have the strongest reason to believe, that he is gone down to realms of greater misery below. And you are to profess before GOD that you HOPE the man RESTS IN CHRIST, and pray that you yourselves may rest in Christ in the same manner as this your brother doth : when you have all the grounds in the world to think he died in his sins, and is therefore not gone to be with CHRIST, where nothing that is defiled can ever be admitted. Strange ! and extremely shocking ! what can the people think, Sir ! what must *Infidels* and *Deists* think ! when they hear you in the morning denouncing from the *Scriptures* certain death and destruction

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from the *presence of GOD*, to all vicious and corrupt persons; and assuring them that *without holiness NO MAN shall see the Lord*: But in the evening from the *Common Prayer*, shall hear YOU, the SAME PERSON, declaring *before GOD* your HOPE of the *eternal happiness* of one of the most debauched and profligate men your parish affords; and sending him hence with all the lofty expressions of confidence and hope, as you would a person of the most shining and exemplary life.

Do you imagine, Sir, People do not think? Can you wonder DEISM prevails? That the *Priesthood* is ridiculed? And that your *good sermons* are no more effectual to reform a corrupt world? To me this appears (and doubtless it does the same to thousands of your own Church) a most indecent prostitution of your *sacred character and office*; a trifling and prevarication in things of everlasting moment; and a fatal snare to the souls of men: Who seeing their debauched neighbour dismissed to the other world with such *confidence* of his good estate, suppress their just fears, and say, *I shall have peace, tho' I add drunkenness to thirst.*

But there is a further very *strange and extraordinary* circumstance attending this matter, *viz.* That it makes your Church perform, not to say a *miracle*, but something very like it, if not greater than that, for it *damns and saves* the same individual persons. Whom it damns when *living*, it saves when *dead*. *Arians and Socinians*, you know, Sir, your Church declares WITHOUT DOUBT to *perish everlastingly*. But let these very men *die*, and your Church as solemnly declares that GOD *hath in GREAT MERCY taken them to himself*, and that it *HOPES they REST IN CHRIST*. Can any thing be more transcendant and marvelous

lous than this! That the man whom I pronounce WITHOUT DOUBT *to be damned*, I yet HOPE *that he is saved, i. e.* I hope *without hope*.

But you would establish, not only the *use*, but the Church's *divine right*, of MAKING ceremonies from the instance of the *holy kifs* *. “The *kifs* “*of charity* used in the Apostolic Church, you “ask, was it a rite of divine appointment, or was “it not?” I answer you, that as I apprehend this kifs of charity cannot properly be called a *divine institution*, nor be said to be *ordained* by the Apostles. The greeting with a kifs, was an ancient established usage, not only amongst the *Jews*, but the *Gentile* nations also. This usage therefore, or ceremony, was not ordained by the Apostles, but only by their advice regulated and directed to a moral and religious end. ’Tis as if they had said, ’Tis your custom when you meet, to salute each other with a kifs, see that it be a pure, a chaste, or holy kifs, a token of unfeigned charity, friendship, and peace.

“But if this ceremony of the *holy kifs*, was not “of divine appointment (which probably, you say, “is the truth of the case) but a merely ecclesiastical prudential institution, *ordained* by the Apostles without any precept from the Lord, or any “particular direction of the *Holy Spirit*.”—Then, Sir, I without the least hesitation say, it was not at all obligatory as a *law* upon the consciences of *Christians*; they might, or they might not practise it, without sinning against GOD. Even the *Apostles* had no dominion over the faith and practice of *Christians*, but what was given them by the special presence and spirit of CHRIST, the only Lawgiver, Lord, and Sovereign of the Church. They

They were to teach only the things which he should command them. Whatever they *injoined* under the influence of *that SPIRIT*, was to be considered and obeyed as the *injunction* of CHRIST. But if they *injoined* any thing in the Church (which I can by no means admit) *without* the peculiar influence and direction of *this Spirit*, (*i. e.* as merely fallible unassisted men) in that case their injunctions had *no authority* over conscience: Every man's *own reason* had authority to examine and discuss their injunctions, and as they approved themselves to his *private judgement*, to observe them, or not. Should we grant then what you ask—"That the Church in the present age, has the same authority and power as the Church in the apostolic age, considered as not being under any immediate and extraordinary guidance of the Holy Ghost."—What will you gain by it? This same authority and power, is you see, Sir, really *no power nor authority at all.*

I proceed next "to the point of DISCIPLINE, the want of which, you say, is objected to *your Church*; but you will represent the real state of it, and then shew that *we* really as much want it *ourselves* *." We will attend *your own account* of it, which to be sure is not too severe. You acknowledge "that the *discipline* of the Church is of *great moment* towards the edification of its members; and that the fault is *unpardonable* when Church governors let it fall, through a supine carelessness and neglect—That there is a great prostration of discipline in the Church of *England*—That it is ruined amongst you—That the distempers of the times are evidently too strong for it—That those who sit at

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* Lett. III. page 12.

“ the helm, find it prudent not to bear up too
 “ much against the impetuosity of the storm, but
 “ to give way till the madness of the people be
 “ still—That the discipline of the Church has not
 “ been carried to any degree of perfection—And
 “ now lies under a *general* relaxation.—That your
 “ people are often indulged in all their unreason-
 “ able demands and disorderly ways, to prevent
 “ their putting in execution their threats, *that they*
 “ *will go to the meeting*—And finally, That you
 “ have at least, the shadow and form of *discipline*,
 “ and trust in GOD that *these dry bones will one*
 “ *day live* *.”

This, it must be owned, is very ingenuously
 and frankly spoken. And can you blame then the
Dissenters, Sir, for joining themselves to *Churches*,
 where that *godly discipline* is observed, which you
 confess to be of so great moment to *the edification*
 of Christian people; and which your Church is
continually WISHING, but never attempts to have
restored. But here you *retort*, and intimate as
 great a want of discipline amongst us. “ What
 “ are there no scandalous sinners, you ask *, no
 “ fornicators, adulterers, extortioners, &c. re-
 “ ceived into your Churches! I must beg your
 “ pardon if I demur upon this. For I could never
 “ perceive the doors of the meeting were ever shut
 “ against any. And if such profligate persons be
 “ not admitted to *sit at the Lord's-table*, they need
 “ not fear being admitted to all other parts of
 “ your worship.”

And is not this, Sir, exactly right? Ought not
 our Church-doors to be always *kept open*, that
 who-

* Lett. III. pages 12, 13, 14, 17, 22, 28.
 page 23.

* Ibid.

whoever will may come, and be witness to our way of worship. Such *profligate* persons therefore may come, if they please, and hear their sins *reproved*, and be *exhorted* to repentance and amendment of life. They are *then*, where they ought to be, under the preaching of the word; the *means* appointed by GOD, to convince and reclaim the profligate and corrupt. Were not *the doors* of the Church at *Corinth* kept *open* in the *Apostle's* days, for *Infidels* to come in, and be *present* at their worship. *Vid.* 1 *Cor.* xiv. 23. But to *the table of the LORD*, to partake of the children's bread, you seem convinced that in *our Churches*, such profligate persons are not suffered to come. And is not this the *true order* and *discipline* of the Christian Church? But—Is it the same, Sir, in *your Church*? Are not some of the most profane and abandoned of men, rakes, debauchees, blasphemers of GOD, and scoffers at all religion, often seen upon their knees around *your communion-table*, eating the *children's bread*, and partaking of the *holy elements* to qualify for a *post*? Dare your Ministers refuse them! No, they dare not refuse the most impious *blasphemer* the *three kingdoms* afford, when he comes to *demand it* as a qualification for an office in the army or fleet.

And if in any *other case*, the Priest *denies* the sacrament to the most *infamous* sinner dwelling in his parish, if the man, upon an appeal to the *ecclesiastical court*, can secure the favour of the *Lay-Chancellor*, he may securely defy both the Minister and the Bishop to keep him from the Lord's-table. The *Chancellor's* determination shall stand in law, though *contrary* to the *Bishop's*; and the Minister be *able* to a *suspension*, for refusing compliance; and if he is contumacious, and will not give

give the man the sacrament, even to *excommunication* itself. How, Sir, do you reconcile *this* with your affirming, “ That your *parish Priest* has as much power as any *Presbyterian* or *congregational Minister*, to repel open and scandalous sinners from the Lord’s-table * ?” Or how with your “ Representing the *Lay-Chancellor* as a person only assumed by the Bishop, not to do any act that is purely spiritual, but only to be his assistant in his ecclesiastical and judicial proceedings † ?”

Is not the Chancellor *supreme* and *uncontrouled* in his court, not liable to be restrained or directed by the Bishop in his *judicial proceedings* ? Does he not *finally* and *absolutely* determine on cases of *excommunication*, *sovereignly direct* who shall be received to, and who cast out from Christian fellowship and worship at the *Table of the LORD* ? And is not *this* an act as purely spiritual, as important and momentous, as any done in the Church ? Must not *his sentence* take place without controul, and is the *Minister* in publishing it any other than *his servant*, appointed by law to put it in execution ?

Will you please to hear, Sir, the sentiments of a great *Prelate* ‡ of your own Church, upon the point in debate.—“ If there be any thing in the office of a Bishop to be challenged peculiar to themselves, certainly it should be this (speaking of *excommunication*) yet this is in a manner quite relinquished to their *Chancellors*; Laymen, who have no more capacity to sentence or absolve a sinner, than to dissolve the Hea-

“ vens

* Lett. III. page 33. † Ibid. page 38. ‡ Dr. Croft, Bishop of Hereford, *Naked Truth*, &c. page 53.

“ vens or the earth. And this pretended power
 “ of the *Chancellor*, is sometimes purchased with
 “ a sum of money. *Their money perish with them!*
 “ Good GOD! what a horrid abuse is this of the
 “ divine authority? But this notorious transgres-
 “ sion is excused, as they think, by this, that a
 “ Minister called the *Bishop's Surrogate*, but is in-
 “ deed the *Chancellor's servant*, chosen, called,
 “ and placed there by him, to be his crier in the
 “ court, no better; that when he hath examined,
 “ heard, and sentenced the cause, then the Mi-
 “ nister, forsooth, pronounces the sentence. Just
 “ as if the Rector of a parish church should ex-
 “ clude any of his congregation, and lock him
 “ out of the church, then comes the Clerk,
 “ shews and jingles the keys, that all may take
 “ notice that he is excluded. And by this his
 “ authority, the *Chancellor* takes upon him to
 “ sentence not only *Laymen*, but *Clergymen* also
 “ brought into his court for any delinquency.
 “ And in the court of *Arches*, they sentence even
 “ *Bishops* themselves.”

“ I remember when the Bishop of *Wells*, hear-
 “ ing of a cause corruptly managed, and coming
 “ into court to rectify it, the Chancellor Dr.
 “ *Duck*, fairly and mannerly bid him *be gone*,
 “ for he had no power there to act any thing;
 “ and therewithal pulled out his patent, sealed by
 “ this Bishop's predecessor, which frightened the
 “ poor Bishop out of the court.”——Behold!
 this is the person, Sir, whom you have the cou-
 rage to represent *as only assumed by the Bishop*, not
 to do any act that is purely SPIRITUAL, but
 ONLY to be his ASSISTANT in his judicial pro-
 ceedings.

But

But as we are now upon the head of *discipline*, and the law called *the TEST* is a battery which has beat down *all its fences* around your Church, and you are a zealous advocate for *that LAW*, you will permit me here, Sir, to enlarge a little upon *that point*: And to ask—How you can bear to see the terrible desolation it has made of your *godly discipline*, without resentment and grief? Can you be jealous, Sir, for the prosperity and honour of your Church, and yet *patiently* view it lying in this *polluted* and *common* state? Its inclosures broken up, and a way opened by *law* for the most flagitious of men, for *Atheists*, professed *Deists*, and the most *open* and *avowed* sinners, to lie securely in its bosom, to suck at its breasts, to be numbered and cherished amongst its holiest and most beloved children, and to be acknowledged before the world as honest and good *Christians*, by being suffered to come boldly to the *table of the LORD*.

But why do I say *suffered*? Does not your Church by the force of this law, even *compel them to come in*? Many of the unhappy persons, conscious of their *unsuitness*, would gladly *draw back*. Knowing themselves perhaps, either to *disbelieve* the truth, or else to *live in open violation* of the laws of *Christianity*, they are loath to add to their other crimes this *prevarication* with *Almighty God*, and affront to *JESUS CHRIST*, and thereby to run a dreadful risque of *eating and drinking judgment to themselves*. But, their *All* lies at stake: They must *qualify*, or be given up to beggary and want. Away therefore with *scruples*! They rush to the Lord's table, and partake of the *sacred elements* with consciences and characters all covered with guilt.

You

You will say, perhaps, it is their own fault, they might have *refused* to come. They might, indeed, if they would have lost their posts, their subsistence, their bread.—But can *the Church* reasonably expect such sacrifices as these, from men of corrupt minds? Is *she* then in *no fault*, in laying men under such strong, almost *invincible* temptations, to this odious hypocrisy and profanation of *holy things*? Is she not highly culpable, for opening her bosom to receive men of *impure characters* to all the *sacred* privileges, liberties, and honours, which belong only to *sincere Christians*? Yea, for owning before the world as worthy and good Christians, *persons* whom the world sees, and whom *the Church* herself cannot but see to blaspheme the name of CHRIST, and to live in avowed contempt of his authority and laws?

And what relief, Sir, has the unhappy Minister, of whom as *Steward in GOD's House*, it is required that he be found FAITHFUL, and who is to answer for his conduct to his great MASTER hereafter? What relief, I ask, has he, when the most *veteran debauchee*, shall come and demand from him *these pledges* of Christian fellowship, and of GOD's paternal love? Truly, none at all: He must receive him as a child of GOD, and a dearly beloved brother to the *table of CHRIST*, or have an *action* commenced against him, and be condemned perhaps in damages more than he is worth.

As much therefore as you are concerned for the honour of *the Church*, and for the interest, reputation, and comfort of its *Clergy*, so much you ought to wish and zealously promote the repeal of *this law*. A law, which whatever was its original intention, hath in its application let in like a

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flood-

You

floodgate upon your Church, the dregs of the human race. A law, which though at first designed only the more effectually to prevent all danger to the constitution from *Papists*, hath by an unnatural perversion of it, actually broken down *all distinctions* established by divine authority, betwixt *sacred* and *profane*: Has thrust Infidels and Profligates into the *most holy places* of your Temple, and brings Deists and Debauchees to eat at the Lord's-table amongst the Children of his House.— Let me ask you, Sir, in the *name of CHRIST*, our common Master and Judge, doth not *this law*, as now enforced, occasion the most notorious *prostitution* of an holy sacrament of his religion? Is not its avowed and open tendency and use, to *pervert* an institution of our SAVIOUR to *ends*, not only quite different, but even opposite to *those* for which HE appointed it? Is it not making *THAT* a *political* Instrument to *divide* Christians, which *CHRIST* instituted as a *religious* instrument to *coalesce* and *unite* them? Must it not be highly odious and offensive to *Almighty GOD*, to see an *holy sacrament*, which his wisdom hath ordained for spiritual only and religious purposes, thus prostituted, perverted; made an engine and tool of *state*, employed to strengthen and perpetuate *differences* amongst good Christians; and thereby debased, not to *worldly* only and *secular*, but to much *worse* than *worldly*, ends?

As to myself, Sir, I assure you, tho' I think *this law* to be a most unrighteous restraint upon us, and an undoubted violation of our natural rights; yet I am far from being persuaded that its *repeal* would be of the least service to our interest as *Dis-senters*. I doubt, and have often thought, that there is too much truth in what you say—“*That*
“ *high*

“ *high trusts, public offices, and court-employments,*
 “ *would be extremely apt to corrupt us, and to make*
 “ *practical religion more visibly decay,*” and that it
 would really rather injure than strengthen our in-
 terest. I have never therefore, as a *Dissenter*, been
 at all solicitous for the repeal. No, Sir, so far
 from this, that could I allow myself to *hate* and
wish ill to the Church, I would most heartily wish
 it pertinaciously to hold fast this shameful corrup-
 tion. I would wish it, by no means, to give up
 this open profanation of the authority and name
 of *Christ*; this prostitution and perversion of an
 holy sacrament of his religion; this destruction of
 all *discipline*; this open door for the reception of
 the most abominable and profane to its most *holy*
mysteries and *rites*: This, if I wish’d it ill, I
 would earnestly wish your Church *inflexibly* to
 continue: not doubting but, if long continued,
 it will surely at length bring down upon it the
 heavy *anger* of *Almighty God*; the just resentment
 and jealousy of a despised and insulted *SAVIOUR*;
 and the deep scorn and contempt of all wise and
 thinking men.

Whilst *this law* continues, Sir, in its present
 application, yourself cannot but see, that your
discipline must necessarily lie scandalously *prostrate,*
ruined, relaxed. ’Tis impossible you can main-
 tain, hardly the *shadow* and *form*, much less the
spirit of primitive ecclesiastic government: Your
holy things must lie *common*, vilely trodden under
 foot. Of all persons in the land therefore, *the*
Clergy should be the *first*, to labour with all their
 might the repeal of this *unhappy law*. A law,
 which cannot but be supposed terribly to bear hard
 upon, and wound the consciences of many of them:
 and which subjects them to so servile a prostitution

of their character, as cannot but load it with great infamy and reproach.

You tell me *, “ That you will engage, *simple* “ *as you sit here*, that this law shall be repealed ; “ and our incapacities removed, when we will “ lay down our enmity to the Church, that is in “ short to one half part of the constitution.— “ For *Church* and *State* here in *England* are so “ incorporated and united, that they have, like “ the married pair, the same friends and ene- “ mies : and stand or fall together.” I can- not pretend to say, Sir, how *simple you sat there*, when you gave us this assurance, but I would to God you were able to *stand up*, and make it good. For,

1. Are you sure that *the Church* is really any *essential* part at all, much less the *half part* of the *British* CONSTITUTION : Or, that *Church* and *State* are so married and interwoven, that they must stand or fall together ?——Many, Sir, besides Dissenters, will think, that this is a very partial and wrong representation of our most excellent frame of government. Let any one in his imagination *annihilate* the form of our *present Church*. Let him suppose its Liturgy, Clergy, Articles, Canons, with all its ceremonies and rites, entirely *vanished* from the land : its *immense revenues* applied in ease of our heavy taxes, and for the payment of the public debts ; and Preachers paid only by voluntary contributions, as they are amongst us. Would *the STATE* hereby sustain so *essential* a loss, that it could not thenceforward *possibly subsist* ? What ! would the *British* monarchy be overthrown—Our courts of judicature be shut up—the course of law be stopped—Parliaments no more

* Lett. I. page 11.

more meet—commerce and trade stagnate—because what you call *the Church* is no more? Romantic and absurd! No: The frame of our happy government, both *civil* and *military*, might remain the *very same*: And you will give me leave to observe on the present occasion, that in one part of this kingdom, those who profess themselves to be of your Church, as to its external polity and ceremonies, are almost to a man inveterate avowed enemies of our happy civil constitution, and have risen in an impious rebellion against his present Majesty, and joined with *Spaniards, French, Italians*, and home-bred Papists, in their wicked attempts to subvert the Protestant religion and liberties.

2. This *destruction* of the Church of England, is what we by no means wish. May GOD in mercy prevent it, by causing her to see, in this her day, *the things belonging to her peace*—We bear it no enmity; GOD is our witness. We wish it from our souls, glory, prosperity, purity, peace: The glory of being formed according to the *perfect plan* of the primitive *apostolic* Church; purged of those things, which yourselves know to be *no parts* of the religion of CHRIST! We wish to see it established upon the catholic and broad bottom, upon which *alone* it can stand firm; even the *scriptural* foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, *Jesus Christ* himself being its *only* Lawgiver and King: and not upon the narrow basis on which it now rests, the *articles* and *canons*, the *institutions* and *inventions* of fallible and weak men; on which it can never be strongly and firmly fixt; which are all, in the Apostle's language, *wood, hay, stubble*; whose end is to be burnt! We wish, Sir, that as it opens its bosom, and admits the vilest debau-

chees without demurring at their open violation of GOD's *commands*; so it would charitably extend its arms to take us into its communion, without insisting upon our obedience to the injunctions and *commands* of MEN! Finally: we wish, that what GOD, in his wisdom, hath been pleased to leave *indifferent*; your Church also, in her wisdom, would be pleased to leave *the same*: that you would not attempt to *mend* the institutions of JESUS CHRIST: but would receive us into your Church upon the same terms and qualifications as CHRIST and *his Apostles* would have received us into theirs; and as GOD will receive us into Heaven at last!—This, Sir, I assure you, is all the *harm* we wish the Church: Judge then yourself, whether we bear it any *enmity*; and whether you are not now bound to take from us the *inconveniences*, which you engaged, *simple as you sat there*, should on this condition be removed.

And you will give me leave, Sir, to think, and to hope, that there are numbers of your worthy *Clergy* of the same mind; that it would not at all lessen either the glory, stability, or prosperity of your Church, if its bounds were *thus enlarged*, to admit the *moderate Dissenters*, who sincerely desire so happy a *coalition*. Its enemies seem to multiply, and dark clouds to rise around it. *Papery* is making dangerous and mighty inroads on the one hand; and *Deism* on the other. There may come a time, as there formerly has been, when the frame of your Church being terribly threatened, we may again be considered as no despicable *auxiliaries*. But—If we cannot be so happy, as not to be *cast out* and *rejected* by our brethren; our consolation is this, that GOD *judgeth in the earth*; and that he will surely, at the *proper season*, vindicate and plead the cause of the injured and oppressed.

But

But to return to the point of *discipline*. To the acknowledged irregularity of Lay-Chancellors in your Church, you would fain "put in balance" the lay-preaching, lay-praying, and lay-ordination allowed in our Churches*." To which I reply, that in the generality of our Churches there is no such thing either allowed, or ever done. Besides, if there were: Did not your *own Church* set us the pattern? In *the rubrick* before the general confession at the communion, did it not direct? —*Then shall this general confession be made, in the name of all those that are to receive, either by ONE OF THEM, or else by ONE OF THE MINISTERS.* How it came to be omitted in the late editions of the Common-prayer; whether it is done according to law, and by authority of Parliament; you, Sir, perhaps can say.

As to "Laymen being an essential part of all" our consistories and synods; sitting in them, and "having an equal vote with pastors in all business" —jointly with them *suspending* from the Lord's-table, &c†." This, Sir, is no other than the *scriptural apostolic* plan. The aggrieved person is by our Lord, you know, *Mat. xviii. 17.* directed to lay his complaint before THE CHURCH, i. e. the congregation of the faithful: and if the offender neglected to hear THE CHURCH (the congregation) admonishing and reproving him, he was then to be considered as an *heathen man and a publican*. So the corrupt member, at *Corinth*, was to be solemnly excommunicated. How? Not by any particular person, *Chancellor or Bishop*; but it was to be the act of the *whole Church*. To the whole body or congregation of believers in that city,

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* *Leit. III.* page 38.† *Ibid.* page 37.

St. Paul gives directions, That when *they were come together, they should deliver such an one to Satan.*—And, that *they should put away from amongst themselves that wicked person*, 1 Cor. v. 4, 5, 13. which *excommunication* he afterwards calls a *punishment inflicted by the MANY*, 2 Cor. ii. 6. So in that weighty and momentous *question*—How far the *Gentiles* were to submit to the law of *Moses*? The *Elders* and *Brethren* are joined with the *Apostles* in the decision and decree, *Acts* xv. 23. The *Laity* therefore have a *right* to be consulted, and to judge, in these important *Church Matters*, together with the *Clergy*; as they do, by their representatives, in what you call our *Consistories*. But with you, Sir, a *single Layman* (this is the absurdity which you seem willing to lose sight of) I repeat it, a *single Layman*, not only in distinction from, but in actual opposition to, *the Bishop*, and all the *Church*, both *Clergy* and *Laity*, has authority to judge and determine these important matters; and excommunicates, or absolves; shuts out, or lets in, according to his *sole* pleasure.

And here, Sir, let me stop a moment, and review the point in debate betwixt our good Dr. *Watts* and yourself. As for *the lives* of the *Dis-senters*, tho' *God knows* we have nothing whereof to *boast*, but a great deal that calls for *shame* and *humiliation* on this head; yet whether we are quite so deep immersed in the deluge of *prophaneness*, *immorality*, and *vice*, which spreads over the land.—Whether the *blasphemies* and *oaths*, the *debauchery*, *riot*, and *guilty excesses*, which too generally prevail, be in proportion to our number, found as *rife* amongst us, as amongst the members of the *established Church*—must be left, and we free-

ly leave it, to the *impartial world* to judge betwixt us.

And as to *special OBLIGATIONS and ADVANTAGES for holy living*, which you contest strenuously with the *Doctor* to lie on your side; what hath been above observed on your several offices for *confirmation, absolution* of the sick, and *burial* of the dead, shews them, I humbly think, to have really an ill aspect upon the morals of your people; a dangerous and apparent tendency to cherish in them *false hopes*, and to give them *wrong notions* of the terms of acceptance, and of entrance into Heaven. And of the deplorable state in which your *discipline* lies (which you acknowledge to be of *great moment* to the edification of the Church) no enemy need to wish a *sadder* account than *yourself* have given of it. Upon the whole therefore, Sir, I cannot think, the worthy *Doctor* to deserve *censure*, for attempting to rouse *Dissenters* from the languishing state of religion amongst them, by putting them in mind of the *superior advantages* they enjoyed, and of the *peculiar obligations* under which they manifestly lay to greater *holiness of life*.

You seem not a little displeased * at its having been urged as a reason for *our dissent*, "That your Church has shewn a persecuting spirit," and with some emotion ask—"Did the Church persecute at any time its own members? Were you or your fathers ever persecuted while they continued in the Church? And were they driven out of it by those persecutions?" I confess, Sir, you quite surprize me by such questions as these. What! are you only a stranger in *Britain*; and have

have never heard of the bitter sufferings of our worthy fathers *the PURITANS*? With what silencings, deprivations, fines, imprisonments, and lingering and cruel deaths, for more than an *hundred years*, they were terribly harrassed and oppressed by your Church? Have you never read, with a *bleeding heart*, the unrelenting rigors of your Archbishops *Parker, Bantroft, Whitegift, Laud*,—under the *first* of whom above *an hundred*; under the *second*, above *three hundred* pious and learned men, not only *Members* but *Ministers* of your Church, were silenced, suspended, admonished, deprived, many of them loaded with grievous and heavy fines, and shut up in filthy jails, where they expired slowly thro' penury and want? And what were the *crimes* which drew this dreadful storm of *episcopal* vengeance on them? Nothing but their scruples about the *Surplice* and the *Cap*, about bowing at the *name of Jesus*, about *Christ's* descent into Hell, and such like momentous points.

Have you never read, Sir, what desolations *Laud* brought upon *our fathers*, whilst yet in your Church? How *many hundreds* of them were sequestred, driven from their livings, excommunicated, persecuted in the high-commission court, and forced to leave the kingdom for not *punctually* conforming to all the ceremonies and rites; and not daring to tell their people, that they might *lawfully* profane the *sabbath* by gambols and sports; and to publish from their pulpits the *permission* of the *King* to break the command of *GOD*—And yet you ask—“*Were your fathers ever persecuted while they continued in the Church?*”

Pray! what was it peopled the savage desarts of *North America*? Was it not the *thousands* of persecuted and oppressed families, who fled from tyrannising

rannising BISHOPS? Who not being suffered to worship quietly in their *native* country, as their consciences directed, sought a peaceful retreat from the rage of their *Fellow-Christians* amongst more *hospitable Indians*.—To omit a thousand acts of cruelty, which thro' several successive reigns *our fathers* suffered not only *from*, but when actually *in, the Church*.—Did she not at last, in a most arbitrary and unrighteous manner *cast out* at once above *two thousand* of them, excellent and pious Ministers, and abandon them, and their starving families, to great poverty and distress? To *heighten* that distress, did not your Church, by *another ACT*, banish them *five miles* from any city, *borough*, or church in which they had before served: and thereby put them at a *proper distance* from their acquaintance and friends, who might minister to their relief? Did she not by *another ACT* forbid their meeting to *worship GOD*, any where but in your *own Churches*, under the penalties of heavy fines, imprisonments, and banishment to foreign lands?

In consequence of these *cruel ACTS*, were not vast numbers of *pious Clergymen*, our forefathers (once the *glory* of your Church) with multitudes of their people, laid in prisons amongst thieves and common malefactors, where they suffered the greatest hardships, indignities, oppressions; their houses were rudely rifled, their goods made a prey to hungry informers, and their families given up to beggary and want. “An estimate was published of near *eight thousand* Protestant Dissenters, who had perished in prison in the reign only of *Charles II.* By severe penalties inflicted on them, for assembling to worship GOD, they suffered in their trade and estates in the compass
of

“ of a few years, at least two millions; and a list
 “ of *sixty thousand* persons was taken, who had
 “ suffered on a religious account, betwixt the *Refor-*
 “ *mation* and the *Revolution* *.”— Behold, the
 groans and the blood of myriads of oppressed *Puri-*
tans, which cry beneath the altar, *How long, O*
 LORD! But you are *deaf* to all their groans—And
 with insensibility enough ask—*Were your fathers*
ever persecuted?—

“ But the Presbyterian and Independant Churches
 “ have each in their day of power, discovered as
 “ much, and indeed *more* of that Spirit *.” Too
 much of that *bad Spirit* ’tis acknowledged, they
 have *each* shewn. But surely there is *no compa-*
ri-son betwixt the cruelties and oppressions of your
 Church, and of their’s. Your *little finger*, has
 been *thicker than their loins*.

“ But whatever the Church may have been
 “ heretofore, you affirm, it is not *now* of a perse-
 “ cuting spirit: and that there is not the least ap-
 “ pearance of its having disquieted and oppressed
 “ any on account of religion, for more now than
 “ half a century †.” You had forgot, Sir, the
 famous *Schism*, and *occasional Conformity ACTS*,
 which long since that date *much disquieted* and *op-*
pressed us. The *Test* and the *Corporation ACTS*
 had also slipped your memory, which at *this time*
 deprive us of valuable and important privileges, to
 which as faithful subjects, and members of the
Commonwealth, we think we have a natural un-
 doubted right.

The present Governors of your Church indeed,
 (Thanks be to heaven for it) are too wise and too
 righteous,

* Vid. *Neal’s Hist. Purit.* Vol. IV, p. 554.
 † Ibid.

† Lett. III.

righteous, to permit *persecution* to rage against us. But to *their* clemency and justice, Sir, not to the kind and benevolent *spirit* and *constitution* of your Church, I humbly apprehend we owe it, that we are not *at this time* severely persecuted and oppressed. If the ACT of *Uniformity*, which to be sure you will call a *grand pillar* of your Church, is not a very unrighteous and persecuting *Act*, yet several of your *Canons* breathe, you know, Sir, a very cursing and persecuting *spirit*. By the *former*, "Whoever shall declare or speak any thing in the derogation or depraving of the book of *Common-prayer*, or any thing therein contained, or any part thereof, he shall for the *first* offence suffer imprisonment for one whole year, without bail or mainprize; and for the second offence, be imprisoned DURING LIFE." Here I affirm nothing, but appeal to the whole world; I appeal, Sir, to your own conscience, whether this be or be not an *unjust and a persecuting ACT*? By the latter, the *Canons*, "If any man shall affirm any of the things contained in the book of *Articles*, *Common-prayer*, or of *Ordination*;" (in which yet there are *many things* acknowledged by your own most learned Divines, and I doubt not, by yourself to need alteration;) your IV, V, VI, VII, and VIIIth *Canons*, thunder out upon him a terrible *excommunication, ipso facto**, by which he is

* Concerning an *Excommunication ipso facto*, our late learned Primate, Dr. Wake, has observed. "First, That there is no need in this case, of any *admonition*, as where the judge is to *give sentence*; but every one is to take notice of the *Law*, at his peril, and to see that he be not overtaken by it. And, Secondly, That there is no need of any *sentence* to be pronounced, which the *Canon* itself has passed; and which is by that means *already promulged* upon every one, as soon as he comes within the *obligation* of it. In other cases, a man may do things worthy of censure, " and

is to be cut off as a cankered and rotten member, and not to be restored, till he hath repented and publicly revoked his *wicked errors*. Doth not this savour, Sir, of an antichristian and persecuting spirit?

But you seem not, with submission, to have *yourself*, a just horror of the dreadful sin of *persecution*, and to be a little too deeply tinged with this *fanatical* spirit: For you call aloud for “the Church’s sword to fall upon *Heretics*, as well as upon *immoral persons*: and put me in mind, that by “that ancient discipline” (which you *wish* to see restored) “*open Schismatics* were treated almost as “*roughly as any sort of offenders whatsoever* *.” By *Heretics*, no doubt, you mean those whom you take to be such: and by *open Schismatics*, those who are withdrawn from *your Church*: *These* you wish to see *roughly handled*, and to have the Church’s sword drawn upon them. But, GOD Almighty be praised! We live under so just a government, as is not, we hope, like to gratify this *cruel wish*.

Do you not remember, Sir, that the *first reformers* were counted *Heretics* and *open Schismatics*, by the top Churchmen amongst whom they lived? That JESUS CHRIST and his *Apostles* were counted the very same? That our *dear brethren* in *France*, who are now *bleeding* under the Church’s sword, are most confidently reckoned *such*, by all the *Rulers*

“and yet behave himself so warily in them as to escape the punishment of the Church, for want of *legal evidence* to *convict* him. “But *excommunicatio canonis ligat etiam occulta de iis*. Where the “*Canon* gives sentence, there is *no escaping*; but the *conscience* of “every man becomes *obliged* by it, as soon as ever he is sensible, “that he has done that which was forbidden, under the pain of “*such an excommunication*.” *Appeal in Behalf of the King’s Supremacy*, page 22.

* Lett. III. pages 12, 21.

lers and Priests there? But is it fit that these *Hereticks* should be thus *roughly handled*? Or, is it *those only*, whom YOU are pleased to call by *that name*, who merit these *rough measures*? Whenever, Sir, you shall produce your patent from Heaven, constituting you JUDGE of HERESY, and shall be able *authoritatively* and *infallibly* to pronounce *what is*, and *what is not*, to be punished as SUCH, *then* the Church's sword will, I hope, be put into your hands. But till *then*, Sir, 'tis much *safer* to let it remain *sheathed*; lest, under the notion of *Hereticks*, you fall upon, and roughly handle, men better than yourself. This has ever been the case, since the days of the Apostles, when *Ecclesiastics* have presumed *authoritatively* to draw and use the *Church's sword*.

But you add, " 'Tis well we can't say your Church has shewn a *dividing* spirit, and *actually divided itself* by an open schism, from a sound part of the Catholic Church; *that*, indeed, would have been an *unanswerable reason* for your dissent *." Yes, *this* also, Sir, we can say, and therefore stand *justified* by your own confession. That misguided unhappy Prince Charles I. and his furious Primate *Laud*, began this *fatal schism*, in complaisance to the Church of *Rome*, and actually divided the *Church of England* from a sound part of the Catholic Church; and the same *schismatical spirit* has ever since too generally prevailed in it.

The *Dutch*, *Walloon*, and *French Churches* here in *England*, were established by charters from several of our Princes; but Lord *Clarendon* informs us, " The *Bishops* growing jealous that the countenancing another discipline of the Church here by

“ by order of State, would at least *diminish* the
 “ reputation and dignity of the *episcopal* govern-
 “ ment,” got them suppressed. “ And that this
 “ might be sure to look like *more* than what was
 “ *necessary* to the CIVIL policy of the kingdom,
 “ whereas in all former times, the Ambassadors
 “ and all foreign Ministers of State employed from
 “ *England*, into any parts where the *reformed re-*
 “ *ligion* was exercised, frequented their Churches,
 “ and gave all *possible countenance* to their profes-
 “ sion; the *contrary* to this was now with *great*
 “ *industry* practised, and some advertisements, if
 “ not instructions, given to the Ambassadors there
 “ (*Le Clerc* says they were *ordered*) to *forbear* any
 “ extraordinary commerce with men of that pro-
 “ fession. And Lord *Scudamore*, the last ordinary
 “ Ambassador there, not only declined going to
 “ *Charenton* (the *Protestant* Church) but furnis-
 “ ed his own chappel with wax-candles on the
 “ communion table, &c. And besides, was care-
 “ ful to publish upon all occasions by himself, and
 “ those who had the nearest relation to him, that
 “ the Church of ENGLAND looked not upon the
 “ *Hugonots* of FRANCE, as a part of THEIR
 “ COMMUNION; which was likewise too much,
 “ and too industriously discoursed at home*.”
 Behold here, Sir, the Church of *England*, actually
 dividing itself from a *sound part* of the Catholic
 Church! For *such* surely you will own the brave
Protestants in France, who have borne *testimony* to
 the faith by so great and so glorious a *fight of afflic-*
tions, and sealed it with *seas of blood*.

I would also put you in mind of another fact,
 that seems to have escaped your reading, or me-
 mory,

* *Clarend. Hist. Rebell. Vol. III. pages 96, 97.*

mory. Upon the Queen of *Bohemia's* earnest solicitation with the King her brother (*Charles I. Anno 1634*) a collection was ordered throughout *England*, for the poor persecuted Ministers of the Palatinate, who were banished their Country for their religion. In the brief which was granted for this purpose, was this clause: *Whose cases are the more to be deplored, because this extremity is fallen upon them, for their sincerity and constancy in the true religion, which we together with them profess.* Archbishop *Laud* excepted against this clause, and denied that the religion of the Palatine Churches was the same with ours, because they were Calvinists, and their Ministers had not episcopal ordination. *Laud* acquainted the King with his objections. The clause was ordered to be expunged, and the brave unhappy *Palatines* were thus publicly disowned by the Governors of the Church, who in all reasonable construction, must be supposed to know and speak its sense, and not allowed to be professors of the same true religion *. How unchristian and schismatical this !

Of the like *schism* was it also guilty, in the *Occasional Conformity ACT*, which took place in a late reign. For it thereby FORBID under *severe penalties*, all its members who had any places of profit or trust, to worship or hold communion with any of the foreign Churches, *Dutch, French, &c.* in those kingdoms, in which its *Liturgy* was not used. And should any Minister of any of the *reformed Churches* of *Scotland, France, Germany, Holland*, now come into *England*, would your Church receive them as *Ministers*, or admit them as such, to officiate in its public worship? I presume you know,

* *Neal's Hist. Purit. Vol. II. page 271.*

know, Sir, she would not. But is not this *virtually* renouncing their Communion? Nor will you admit even the *Lay Members* of any of these *foreign Churches*, to your Communion at the *Lord's-supper*, except besides what *CHRIST* has *ordered*, they will submit also to some *order* and *institution* of *YOUR OWN*.

Now your great *Stillingfleet* * hath thus determined — “ That which *confines*, must also divide
 + “ the Church; for by that *confinement*, a *Separation* is made betwixt the parties confined, and
 “ the other; which separation must be made, by
 “ the party *so limiting* Christian Communion.”
 Upon the whole then, 'tis most evident, that your Church has shewn, and does shew, a *schismatical* and *dividing* spirit, has actually *divided itself* from sound parts of the universal Church. This therefore you will please to take, as an *unanswerable reason* for our *dissent*.

You must excuse me, Sir, if I think you treat a great deal *too severely* a worthy body of men, our *MINISTERS*; when you represent them as
 “ persons whom the faithful, far from being permitted to enter into any *pastoral relation* to
 “ them, are not permitted to have any *Christian Communion* with them; no, not so much as any
 “ *intimate unnecessary* acquaintance and familiarity with them in *common life* *.” — And tell me —
 “ They are not duly ordained to their office; that
 “ their administrations are most certainly irregular, an unnecessary and wanton, if not a factious departure from the primitive order. And
 “ that therefore I cannot depend, at least with so
 “ much assurance, as is requisite to the peace and acqui-

* Ration. Account, page 359.

† Lett. II. page 8.

"acquiescence of my mind, that such ordinances
 "will be blessed to me*."—I have weighed this
 matter with a good deal of attention, and upon
 the whole am fully satisfied, both from *Scripture*
 and *Antiquity*, that *Presbyters* have a right to, and
 did from the Apostles times actually *ordain*. There
 are *two* things, amongst many others, which I beg
 leave to offer to your consideration upon this
 point.—

1. That the Ministers of the *reformed Churches*
 in all foreign parts, have almost all of them,
 I apprehend, no other than *Presbyterian* ordina-
 tion.

The whole company of illustrious Protestant
 Churches of *Scotland, France, Holland, Switzer-
 land, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Denmark*, ex-
 cept perhaps *Sweden, &c.* have none but *Presby-
 terian* ordination amongst them. For *Luther,
 Calvin, Bercer, Melancton, Bugenhagius, &c.* and
 all the first *Reformers* and *Founders* of these
 Churches, who *ordained* Ministers amongst them,
 were themselves *Presbyters* and *no other*. And
 though in some of these Churches, there are *Mi-
 nisters* which are called *Superintendants, or Bishops*,
 yet these are only *primi inter pares*†, *the first a-
 mong equals*; not pretending to any *superiority of
 ORDER*. Having *themselves* no other Orders than
 what either *Presbyters* gave them, or was given
 them as *Presbyters*, they can convey *no other* to
 those they ordain ‡. You are a gentleman of too
 great

* Lett. I. page 73. † Account of Denmark, page 253.

‡ The *Danish* Church is indeed at this time governed by *Bishops*.
 But they look upon *Episcopacy* as only an human institution; and
 the first Protestant Prelates in that kingdom, were ordained by *Bu-
 genhagius*, a meer *Presbyter*; who by consequence, could convey
 no other than a *Presbyterian* ordination to their successors ever
 since.

great discernment to urge the stale pretence, that this is to these Churches a matter not of *choice*, but of *necessity* and *force*. For if they thought *episcopal ordination*, I do not say *necessary*, but even more *regular* or *expedient*, could they not with the *greatest ease* immediately obtain it? Would not the Church of *England*, upon the *least* intimation of their willingness to receive it, most readily send them *Bishops* to supply this defect? You know, Sir, too well its charitable disposition, and even *offers* of this kind, in the least to suspect it. Whatever *censures* you pass then upon the *orders* and *administrations* of the Ministers amongst us, they equally fall upon all the *reformed Churches* throughout the whole *Protestant world*. If *ours* are an unnecessary and wanton departure from the primitive order, *theirs* are the same. Now it gives me great pleasure to see myself in such a crowd of excellent and good company. And unless you can offer something more *demonstrative* on this head, than I have ever yet seen; my mind will enjoy *full peace* as to the regularity of the ministration on which I attend. But,

2. It seems a little strange to hear you glorying over *us*, and consequently over all the *foreign Churches*, as to this matter of *ORDERS*, when these *very ORDERS* in which you glory, you acknowledge to have derived *ONLY* from the *Church of ROME*. A *Church* which yourselves, in your homilies, confess to be *idolatrous* and *antichristian*,
 “ Not only an *harlot*, as the Scripture calleth her,
 “ but also a foul, filthy, old, withered *harlot*;
 “ the *foulest* and *filthiest* that ever was seen.—And
 “ that

“ that as it at present is, and hath been for 900
 “ years, it is so far from the nature of the TRUE
 “ Church, that nothing can be more *.”—*Note,*
 These *homilies* every Clergyman publickly declares,
 and subscribes with his hand, that they contain a
godly and wholesome doctrine, fit to be read in
 Churches by Ministers.

Now it is ONLY, Sir, from this *filthy, wither-*
ed, old HARLOT, that you derive, by ordination,
 your *spiritual descent*. You confess yourselves *born*
of her, as to *ecclesiastical pedigree*: And the sons of
 this foulest and filthiest of Harlots, you acknow-
 ledge as *brethren*, by admitting *their Orders* as re-
 gular and valid; whereas *those* of the *Protestant*
Churches you reject. If a *Priest*, ordained with all
 the superstitious and idolatrous rites of this *anti-*
christian and false Church, comes over to the
 Church of *England*; you admit him as a BRO-
 THER, *duly ordained*; without obliging him to
 pass under *that ceremony* again: but if a Minister
 of the *reformed Churches* joins himself to you, you
 consider him as but a *Layman*, an *unordained per-*
son, and oblige him to receive *Orders* according to
 your form. How, Sir, is it possible to account
 for this procedure! Can *that Church*, which is *no*
true Church, impart *valid and true Orders*? Can
 a *filthy old Harlot* produce any other than a *spuri-*
ous and corrupt breed? Will you rest the *validity*
 and *regularity* of your administrations on your re-
 ceiving the *sacerdotal character* from the Bishops
 and Popes of the *Romish Church*? Many, if not
 most, of whom, were men of most corrupt and
 infamous lives; *men*, who were so far from being
 regular and *valid MINISTERS* in the Church of
 JESUS CHRIST, that they were not so much as

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* Vid. Homilies, pages 162, 295.

regular or *real* MEMBERS of it at all ; and therefore could not possibly, *duly*, or *regularly* OFFICIATE therein ; consequently, had *no power* to communicate or convey *Orders* or *Offices* in the CHRISTIAN Church. Whatever *Offices* they conveyed therefore, are at best doubtful and suspicious ; if not absolutely null, irregular, and void.—So that really your own *Orders*, if strictly examined, may minister great doubt and diffidence of mind.

If *Charity* then were silent ; *Prudence*, methinks, should loudly dictate, that you *speak gently* as to the authority and orders of our *Ministers*, when you know it is in their power so strongly to *retort*. It was therefore surely not *wise*, Sir, as well as extremely *unkind*, to set them up as objects of public *odium* and *avoidance* ; and to admonish “ every good man not to have any intimate or unnecessary acquaintance with them, or familiarity in common life.” But — BLESSED, our Lord hath said, *are ye, when men shall hate you, and SEPARATE YOU from their COMPANY, and CAST OUT your names as EVIL, for the Son of man's sake : REJOICE ye in that day, and leap for joy ; for behold, your reward in Heaven is great * !*

You very strenuously contest what you call “ one of the favourite and fundamental principles “ of the dissention, namely, *That every Lay-Christian has a right to chuse his own Pastor* †. A right so evidently founded on *Reason*, *Scripture*, and the undoubted *Practice* of the primitive Church, and so generally acknowledged by all the learned of your own Communion, that I cannot but a little wonder at the alertness with which you

* Luke vi. 22, 23.

† Lett. II. page 6.

you make your attack upon it. The charge given to the Christian people—*To take heed what they hear—to beware of false Prophets—not to believe every Spirit, but to try the Spirits*—incontestibly proves them to have a right of judgment and of choice, relating to this matter: and that *this right*, which GOD has given them, it is *their duty* to use.

When an *Apostle* was to be chosen in the room of Judas the traitor, the whole body of the Disciples were applied to on that occasion, *Acts i.* who APPOINTED by common suffrage, TWO from their whole number to be candidates for that office, § 23. “*The election, you say, was evidently made by GOD *.*” But was it not as evidently made by the people also? If the choice of ONE from the TWO be acknowledged to be the act of GOD; was not the choice of *these TWO*, from amongst the whole number, as much the act of the people? The people then were *actually* concerned in that choice. “*The seven Deacons, Acts vi. you say, were but presented or recommended by the brethren †.*” But let the sacred story judge—*Wherefore, brethren, LOOK YE OUT amongst you, seven men of honest report: And the saying pleased the whole multitude, and they CHOSE Stephen and Philip, &c.*—Can words be more express?

That *Bishops* and *Pastors* were chosen in the ancient Church by the suffrage of the people, the evidence is so strong, as greatly to try the countenance of the person who disputes it. *Ignatius*, if you will allow him genuine, says *πρεπον εστιν υμιν ως εκκλησια Θεου χειροτονησαι επισκοπον ‡.* *It becomes you*

* Lett. II. page 8.

† Ibid.

‡ Epist. ad Philad.

you as the Church of GOD to CHUSE a Bishop. Alexander was made Bishop of Jerusalem, by the compulsion or CHOICE of the members of that Church. Upon the death of Anterus, Bishop of Rome, All the people met together in the Church to CHUSE a Successor—and they all took Fabianus and placed him in the episcopal chair. So Cornelius, his Successor, was ELECTED by the suffrage of the Clergy and Laity. Cyprian often acknowledges he was made Bishop of Carthage, *Favore Plebis—Populi universi Suffragio, &c.* By the FAVOUR and VOTE of all the People *. And expressly says, *Plebs maximè habet potestatem, vel eligendi dignos Sacerdotes, vel indignos recusandi.* The chief power of CHUSING worthy Ministers, and of REJECTING the unworthy, belongs to THE PEOPLE. I produce no further evidence upon a point so incontestible, but the words of a learned Brother of your own, high enough for Church-power, “That the people had votes in the choice of Bishops all must grant; and it can be only IGNORANCE and FOLLY that pleads the contrary †.”

“ You think a man provides very well for his soul, who submits himself to the instructions, and devoutly attends all the administrations of an able and orthodox Minister, by whomsoever provided. And it will be confessed, you suppose, that the King, and Bishops, Lord-Chancellor, Nobility, and Gentry, who are our greater patrons, are more competent judges of the abilities and orthodoxy of Clergymen, and of their fitness for particular stations, than the common run of men, especially the vulgar ‡.” But imagine your-

* Vid. Constitut. and Discipline of the Primitive Church. page 46. † Lowth on Church-power. ‡ Ibid; page 9.

yourself, Sir, for a moment on the other side the water, preaching this wholesome doctrine to the good *Protestants* in *France*. If *Kings, Bishops, &c.* have authority and right to *appoint Pastors* to the people, then the people *are bound* to receive and attend *the Pastors* they send. But if this be *right* in one country (I must again put you in mind) 'tis *right* also in another; unless *one kingdom* can produce a warrant, or charter from Heaven giving it *such authority*, which *other kingdoms* have not. If this doctrine be truth in *England*, 'tis truth also in *France*. The brave *Protestants* then have *rashly* and *unwarrantably* withdrawn themselves from the *Pastors*, whom their *King* and *Bishops* had set over them; they ought to return, and submit to their *established* guides, and not *proudly* attempt to find *Ministers* more able and orthodox, than those *their superiors* have solemnly deputed to that trust. —Will you stand, Sir, to this doctrine? If not, you must allow every man a right to judge for himself.

To the common and just plea—"That every man has as good right to chuse his own *Pastor*, to whom to commit the care of his soul, as to chuse his *Lawyer* or *Physician*, with whom he intrusts his body or estate," you reply: "Physicians in many places are provided by Governors for those who are sick, as in *Chelsea*, and other Hospitals, whilst no body dreams of any incroachment upon their natural rights*." But tell me, Sir, would you not complain, if whenever you were sick, you were OBLIGED to accept of this *public provision*; and MUST commit yourself to the care of those gentlemen of the faculty

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culty who officiated in the Hospital, supposing you lived near it, whatever notion you had of their fidelity or skill? Or should a *Physician* be provided, and established *by Law* in each parish of this kingdom, would you not call it an *infringement* of your natural right, to be *obliged* to call him in (however *ignorant* or *uncapable* you took him to be) and to commit your health to his care; especially if there was at hand *another*, licensed by authority, whom you thought to have better judgment, and from whose prescripts you had received frequent and signal relief? I am persuaded in this case, you would strongly and very justly *complain* of the restraint. But every man surely, is as capable, and has as undoubted a right *to judge* and *to chuse* what Minister to attend for the edification of his soul, as what Physician to use for the recovery of his health.

“ No, you reply, there is a difference in the
 “ *two* cases; your *Pastors* are your *Guides* and *Governors*, to whom you owe *subjection* in spiritual
 “ things: And it is not, I think, quite so reasonable to challenge to yourselves the chusing of
 “ these, as of the other who have *no authority* over
 “ you *.” But I beseech you, good Sir, who MADE them my GOVERNORS? Who GAVE them this rule and authority over me? Does every gay STRIPLING, just emancipated from the College, that can get (and there are various ways of getting, you know Sir, not fit to be here mentioned) to be inducted into a good living, does he, I ask, thenceforward become GOVERNOR of all the souls dwelling in his parish, to whom they owe SUBJECTION in spiritual things? What, must
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all the learned, the wise, the grave, and experienced persons residing in that parish, consider the *enrobed* YOUTH as their *spiritual* RULER, vested with AUTHORITY *over them*, in things pertaining to GOD, to Conscience, and to Eternity! Yes, *he has* AUTHORITY, you say, *over me*, I owe him *spiritual* subjection. But how far, Sir, does the authority of my *young* RULER extend? Must I *believe* whatever he tells me, because *He* hath said it; or, *do* whatever he commands me, because *He* hath enjoined it; or, follow my *spiritual* Guide wherever *He* shall lead me, without considering, examining, and judging for myself, whither the course tends? And if I happen to think he is leading me *wrong*, must I still *obey* and *submit* to my *ghostly* DIRECTOR, and trust GOD with the event? Am I to deliver myself up ENTIRELY, or only *a little*, and *in part*, to his sacerdotal authority? And must I see things in religion, *only* and *always* by the eyes of my *overseer*, or ought I not also *sometimes*, at least, to see with *my own*? Will you please to inform me also, whether as my *young* GOVERNOR undertakes *to judge* for me now, he will also undertake *to be judged* for me hereafter; and *to be damned* for me too, if I happen to go astray, by going as *he* directs?—A certain *Nobleman*, not half a century ago, got his *huntsman* inducted into a good living; and from the *care of his hounds*, advanced him to the priesthood and to the *cure of souls*. Now from the time of his investiture with this new character and office, he became the GOVERNOR and GUIDE, it seems, of *all the souls* in his parish, and they OWED him *subjection* in *spiritual* things. If a *Locke* then, a *Newton*, or even his *Lordship* himself who gave him the living, had dwelt within its bounds,

they ought reverently to regard HIM as their *spiritual* GOVERNOR and DIRECTOR; and to submit themselves to him, as having THE RULE over them, and watching for their souls.—But are these claims to be vouched, or is this doctrine to be preached, in this age of liberty and light? Let them for the honour of CHRISTIANITY, be eternally suppressed.—I am forced then to return, Sir, to the point whence I set out, and to acknowledge the right which every man has, in things of religion, to call no man upon earth MASTER, but to examine and judge, and chuse for himself.

As to the manner in which the choice of our Ministers is conducted, against which you except, I believe no elections of any kind, are transacted with greater fairness and equity than these. And the nature of the thing speaks, that thus it must be. For ours being assemblies formed only by consent, and supported only by voluntary contributions of their members, any oppressive or iniquitous management would throw them presently into confusion, disband and break them up. To your question—*Who are the Electors?* And to all the objections you raise on that head—I reply, by praying you to turn your eyes, Sir, to a British Parliament, or to an English Convocation, and tell me, *who are the Electors?* And how is the choice conducted? But if both the Parliament and Convocation, notwithstanding the enormous disproportion and inequality of the Electors, be yet accounted and gloried in as the REPRESENTATIVE of the nation; and you compliment your Fellow Britons upon their invaluable privilege in being ruled by Laws of their own making, and in paying no taxes, but what themselves by their Representatives, have

have *consented to levy*.——Your exceptions to our elections will be presently withdrawn, and you will still give us leave to *glory*, as possessing this ancient undoubted right of the Christian Church.

But 'tis time, Sir, that I now release your patience and attention, having strained, I fear, both to their utmost extent. There are many other parts of your letters as liable to remark, as those I have taken notice of, but I would not be tedious.—I might have expostulated with you largely on your reading, as parts of your public worship, the fabulous and gross *legends* of *Bel and the Dragon*, of *Judith* and *Susannah*; and above all, the *magical romance* of receiving a fair virgin from the enchantments of her *infernal lover*, and conjuring away the *amorous Devil Asmodeus*, by the fumes of a fish's liver.——Is it for the honour of the *Christian* name, think you Sir, to have such *spurious and idle tales* read solemnly in our Churches (if solemnly they can be read) and made parts of our *public worship*? What will an *unbeliever* think, when present at such worship! When he sees *such things* not only bound up with the HOLY SCRIPTURES, but commanded to be read *as such* in the order of the Common-prayer! Will it not heighten his contempt of the *credulity* of believers, and establish his prejudices against the history, the miracles, and doctrines of CHRIST?—

I might also have asked you, Sir, to what *oriental DEITY* you pay your devoirs, when from the *North*, the *South*, the *West*, the worshippers in your Church on certain solemn occasions, turn reverently towards *the EAST*, and make their *peculiar honours*? To WHOM, Sir, I beseech you, are these *peculiar honours* paid? Not surely to the

immense, omnipresent JEHOVAH ; he is an INFINITE Spirit, you know, alike present in all places ; not more confined to one quarter of the Heavens, than to another : To represent him as *being so*, is to dishonour and offend him, to detract from the glory of his *Immensify or Omnipresence*, and to give men very false and unworthy notions of GOD. This worshipping towards *the East*, is not, I think, *ordered* by any Canon of your Church, which is now generally received ; but 'tis (if I mistake not) its *common and prevailing practice*. I should be glad to be informed, for I assure you, Sir, I am quite ignorant, what *shadow* of ground, either from Reason or Scripture, you can possibly pretend, for this unaccountable *Superstition*, for such you must allow me at present to think it. If you say, the worship is paid toward *the ALTAR*, this seems to make the matter more inexplicable still. For *what* is there in the ALTAR, to make it a proper object of *religious* veneration ? Indeed, whilst the *Bread* GOD was upon it, the people who believed it to be the *very body* of CHRIST, did well to pay their homage to it : But now *that IDOL* is taken thence, I cannot for my life perceive, what shadow of *Divinity* Protestants see in the ALTAR, that they should give it *religious* honours.

As much, Sir, am I at a loss, when endeavouring to reconcile to reason and good sense, another of your *additional beauties and splendors* of public worship, *viz. bowing at the name* of JESUS. As for that passage of the Apostle, *Philip. ii. 10. That at the name of JESUS every knee shall bow*—the learned men of your Church, I presume, *universally* disclaim it, as in the least *authorizing or injoining* this practice. Your great Dr. Ni-

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*chols** vindicates your Church from such an *uncouth and ridiculous abuse* of this text, and affirms, *that it is not once mentioned in any of your ecclesiastical constitutions*, as to this matter; and adds, *that you are not so DULL as to think, that those words can be rigorously applied to this purpose*. But if this text be acknowledged not in the least to authorize or require this *act of worship*, what shadow of argument, Sir, can you possibly bring, either from *Reason or Scripture*, which shall so much as seem to support it? Why then does your Church command (Canon XVIII.) *that when in time of divine service the LORD JESUS shall be mentioned, duly and lowly reverence shall be done by all persons present*? Is not this, Sir, by your own confession, an act of *will worship*, a *commandment*, an *invention of men*, not in the least founded upon the authority and will of GOD!

But why, Sir, must this *lowly reverence* be made at the *name of JESUS*, and not at the name of CHRIST, at the name IMMANUEL, JEHOVAH, or GOD? Is there not in *all these*, something at least as venerable and worthy of *peculiar honours*; indeed something *much more* so, than there is in the *name of JESUS*; a name not at all *peculiar* to our blessed Saviour, but which was *common* to him with a great many other men?—But if this *peculiar reverence* must be made at the *name of JESUS*, why not at *all times* whenever 'tis mentioned, at least in public worship? Why in the *Creed* only, which is but a *human composition*, and not every time 'tis read from the *Gospels and Epistles*, which were indited by the HOLY GHOST? But I press no further a point, which I believe few

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of your own Church think capable of a rational and solid defence.—

I have now finished my reply, Sir, to *the Letters* with which you have publicly honoured me, and have with freedom set before you, the chief *difficulties* and *objections* which keep me in a state of separation from your Church. If by calm and fair argument, you can shew my objections to be futile and weak, I shall with pleasure become your *convert*, and readily obey the calls of worldly interest and honour.

But as you, Sir, have the *dignities, emoluments, and powers* of this world on your side, you must give us leave to think, at least till we are better taught, that we have **TRUTH** on our's. **TRUTH**, which is **GREAT**, and *will finally prevail*. Nor am I, Sir, without hope, that, upon an *impartial* review of the merits of the cause betwixt us, *omnipotent TRUTH* may even bend your mind towards us; and dispose you, like one who has since had the honour of being called the *great Apostle*, to join yourself to *those* you once censured and despised.

What though we have not the *honours* and *profits* of this world to draw you to our Communion, are we ever the less like to be the genuine *Apostolic Church* of a crucified, despised, insulted **JESUS** for this? Hath he not expressly told us, that *his kingdom is not of this world* *.—That *whoever will come after him, must deny himself, and take up his cross* †.—That *not many mighty and noble are called* ‡?—Are not the *witnesses to TRUTH*, to *Prophecy, clothed in sackcloth* §, till the promised *times of refreshing* come from the appearance of **CHRIST**?

* John xviii. 36.

† Matt. xvi. 24.

‡ 1 Cor. i. 26.

§ Rev. xi. 3.

CHRIST? Is not the PURE Apostolic Church, the true Spouse of CHRIST, represented in the Revelation as a woman driven into the wilderness *, i. e. in an afflicted and forsaken state; whilst the corrupt and antichristian Church (the apostate Church of Rome) is caressed and enriched by the Kings of the earth †, glittering in all the pomp and splendor of this world, wantoning in luxury, power, and wealth? Does TRUTH need the charms of earthly grandeur to recommend it, or the force of civil power to spread or to establish it? Was it thus the blessed GOSPEL was at first propagated, made its way, and prevailed over all the earth? No, worldly grandeur and power have generally, you well know, Sir, if not evermore, been extremely injurious to it; have enervated, obstructed, under pretence of improving, have greatly corrupted and depraved it, and have robbed it of its native beauty, and glory, and strength.

High dignities and preferments, mitres and thrones, lordships and large revenues, have a mighty force, you will own Sir, to bias and pervert the mind, in its searches after TRUTH. These are not the means which the God of TRUTH uses, to draw the mind to it; but you know they are the means, which the great ENEMY is wont to use, to seduce the mind from it. 'Tis therefore, I apprehend, Sir, no presumption at all in favour of any Church, that it shines with all the glory of worldly honours and wealth. This the prophetic Scriptures very clearly describe as the state of the false Church, whilst the true Church of JESUS CHRIST, his genuine and faith-

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* Rev. xii. 14.

† Ibid. xvii. 4, 5—13—17.

ful followers, are to be a little, *despised flock*: A *sect every where spoken against*: In the world it is to have tribulation, till the expected happy period, when it shall be the FATHER's good pleasure to give them THE KINGDOM.

Let not then the *low estate* of our Interest, as to the present world, at all frighten or discourage you, Sir, from casting in your lot amongst us. *The world passeth away*, and all its glories and pomp will soon vanish like a dream before the descending Son of GOD, whom we stedfastly expect. —And then to be *found faithful*; and to have stuck with *unshaken LOYALTY* to the ONLY Lawgiver, Lord, and King of the Church. —To have *denied ourselves* any worldly honours, preferments, or profits out of conscience towards Him. —To have been *separated from mens company*, cast out and reproached, because we would not make a sacrifice of our virtue and integrity to the applause of *the many*, or the favour of *the great*. —Will yield divine comfort, and procure *immortal honours* in the everlasting kingdom of GOD. Pardon me, Sir, if I am here acting a little out of character, and seem to invade *your office*: For I am extremely ambitious of engaging so ingenious a gentleman amongst us.

These, Sir, are the prospects with which *Dissenters* support themselves under all their disadvantages with regard to the present world. They remember *whose Disciples and Followers* they are —WHO *it is* that hath said, IN VAIN *do they worship me, teaching for doctrine the COMMANDMENTS OF MEN*. WHO hath strictly charged them to call NO MAN upon earth MASTER, because ONE only is their MASTER, even CHRIST.

CHRIST.—And, finally, WHO *it is* that hath promised, that *if any man shall forsake house, or brethren, or sisters, or children, or lands, for his names sake; he shall receive an hundred fold; and shall inherit EVERLASTING LIFE.*

I now conclude, Sir, by beseeching you very carefully to remember, that the controversy betwixt us depends *absolutely and entirely* upon the decision of this *single point*.—Is there any OTHER *Lawgiver* or *King* in the Church of GOD, to whose *authority and command*, as to things of religion, CHRISTIANS are bound to submit, BESIDES JESUS CHRIST? Or is there not?—If there be *no other Lawgiver, besides JESUS CHRIST, no other King, no other authority* to whose *decrees* in point of doctrine, and to whose *injunctions* in point of worship, CHRISTIANS are obliged, and ought to *submit*: then *the* DISSENTERS, in every impartial judgment, will be, must be *justified*: then They *act right*: then They ought to be *commended*, and will surely be *rewarded* for adhering loyally and firmly to the ONE only KING and LORD of the Church: And for faithfully opposing the claims of any OTHER *Power*; and for refusing obedience to the *injunctions* of any OTHER *Lawgiver*; and the *decisions* of any OTHER *Judge*; who hath made *other* articles of Faith, *other* terms of Communion, *other* rites of Worship, BESIDES and ABOVE those which CHRIST himself has made.

For to illustrate the case.—If any *foreign Prince* shall pretend to make laws, and prescribe rules of action to the people of *these realms*, and shall exact obedience to his *injunctions* from the subjects

jects of King GEORGE ; I ask, does not your *allegiance* to HIM, your ONLY Sovereign, *require* and *oblige* you to make your protest against any such laws, and to *refuse* your obedience to them ? But is not the Church a *province* in which CHRIST ALONE is King, as much as these realms are the dominions ONLY of King GEORGE ? If any *human Potentate* then shall rise up in the Church, and shall claim *authority* and *dominion* over the consciences of CHRIST's subjects ; authority as to *things of Faith*, to decree what HE hath not decreed ; and dominion as to *things of Worship*, to appoint rites and institutions which HE hath not appointed ; I ask you, Sir, does not your *allegiance* to CHRIST, your ONLY Sovereign, *require* and *oblige* you to enter your protest against such *usurped authority*, and to *refuse* your obedience to it ?

This, Sir, I repeat it, because I earnestly *intreat* your peculiar attention to it, is the *essential* and *important* point upon which the controversy betwixt us entirely turns. If you *can* prove, that there is ANOTHER Lawgiver, ANOTHER Judge, ANOTHER King in the Church, *besides* JESUS CHRIST, to whose authority we are to submit in things of religion ; and that the King and Parliament of these realms are this Lawgiver, and this Judge ; you will then at once gain your point ; and by that *single blow* you will entirely overthrow the *dissenting* Interest and Churches. We will immediately become your Converts, and flock into the *Established Church*.

But if you *cannot* prove this point ; you then *yield* the cause to us ; you then, in effect, own us *justified* before the world ; and you leave us to in-
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dulge the rational and reviving hope of being acknowledged by our *great* LAWGIVER, at his return into the world, as his *loyal* and *obedient* subjects; of being advanced to *peculiar* honours and dignities in his kingdom, as we have here suffered on account of our *duty* and *allegiance* to him; and of receiving from our JUDGE, before angels and men, that sentence of applause—*Well done, GOOD and FAITHFUL Servants, enter ye into the joy of your LORD.*

I have only to add, Sir, that this principle—— That CHRIST is the *only* Lawgiver and King in his Church; and that no man, no body of men upon earth, have any authority to make laws, or to prescribe things *in religion*, which shall oblige the consciences of his subjects; is *the grand, the only* principle, upon which the UNITY, the PURITY, and the PEACE of the *Christian Church* can possibly subsist. Take away *this*, and you let in endless discords and corruptions into it: You split it into parties: You make CHRISTIANITY one thing, in one country; a quite different, in another. In *England* you make it wear an *Episcopal* form: In *Scotland*, a *Presbyterian*: In *France*, a *Popish*: In *Denmark*, a *Lutheran*: In *Prussia*, a *Calvinist*: in *Russia*, a *Grecian*, &c. — But ought these things to be so? Is CHRIST *divided*? Is this *the* UNITY of his one beautiful, well-compacted *body*? Can these be *all* genuine apostolic CHRISTIANITY?—Rather, are either of them so?—When the *powers of this world* take upon them *authoritatively* to interpret and prescribe in things of religion, which are CHRIST's kingdom and province, they act beyond their sphere: They invade the throne of *another* Prince: The certain
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consequence of which is confusions, separations; the *unity* of the Church is broken, the rights of *Christians* violated, a gate opened for innumerable superstitions and inventions to enter, and mingle with the pure doctrines of CHRIST; and hence necessarily flow schisms, emulations, contentions, and every evil work.—

I beseech you, Sir, by the *mercies* of GOD; and for the *honour* of CHRISTIANITY; and by the *allegiance* you owe your ONLY Lawgiver JESUS CHRIST, to weigh these things in an impartial and unbiassed mind. May his *Spirit* of TRUTH judge betwixt us upon the point, and teach us his will! To his influence I commend you, Sir, and am,

With great Sincerity,

Your very humble Servant,

A DISSENTER.

POSTSCRIPT,

*Containing Remarks on the DEFENCE of your
Three Letters.*

THE above Letter being sent to the press before your *Defence*, &c. was advertised; its publication was staid, till I had seen what occasion it might give, either to retract or support what was offered in my *first Letter*. You seem moved at its pretending to be an Answer to your *three Letters*, when so small a part of them is considered therein: And with airs quite suitable to the cause you are pleading, *ecclesiastical authority*, give me to understand, that your taking any notice of this performance is to be considered as a condescension to which you were not obliged, and which I had no right to expect from you. But, pray recollect: What was the avowed design and purport of your Letters? Was it not to *refute the great and popular objections of the Dissenters*, and to *bring me over to your Church*? But upon reading your Letters, I found you had scarce touched upon the *principal objection* which kept me from your Church. Was it not then my part to state the objection to you, and set it in its full light? As *unasked*, you had taken on you to be my instructor in this affair; had I not a right to lay my difficulty before you, and to demand
your

your solution of it? What, must I *confine* myself to the *pleas* which you had seen fit to cook up for the Dissenters; and if I presume to offer *others*, will you magisterially call them *ramblings*, in which you are not obliged to follow? Very pleasant indeed!

Here therefore I now put in my claim, Sir, and give you to understand, that I expect your plain and full answer to the *several objections* against your *established forms* presented in the above Letter: Some of which, tho' you knew them to be of great weight with Dissenters, you dextrously avoided bringing into the debate. To this you are most clearly and indispensably obliged by the province you have taken on you. If there be any parts of the *Liturgy* indefensible and absurd, this (1.) condemns your own CONFORMITY, who not only declare, but solemnly subscribe your *unfeigned assent and consent* to ALL and EVERYTHING contained in and prescribed by the *Book of Common-prayer*, &c. And (2.) it justifies the SEPARATION, by proving it a severe and cruel thing to cast out above 2000 of our Ministers from the Church for not declaring and subscribing this *unfeigned assent and consent*, &c. which began the Separation.

This being premised, we come to the point of Church-authority, upon which the controversy turns. Here I observe with pleasure, that you are for mutilating your XXth article, ridding your hands of one part, and holding only to the other. "The Church's authority in matters of *faith* you have nothing, you say, to do with*."

—But this, you know, your Church claims as much as a power to make ceremonies; and against

* Defence, page 18.

this Part of its claim I as much excepted as against the other. When you declare therefore *you have nothing to do with it*, you mean, if I take you right, you will not pretend to undertake its defence. This to be sure is wise: No man upon earth being able to defend it. But then, is it not extremely hard that your Church should still *inflexibly* maintain its claim to *this authority*: Should force its *clergy* to subscribe and acknowledge this claim; and keep Dissenters from a share in those emoluments, "*after which, you say, they languish,*" partly for refusing their solemn subscription to so *unreasonable* a claim?

"By the Church's power to decree rites and ceremonies, is meant, a right in the pastors and governors thereof, to ordain and appoint such things, so as to make it, *ordinarily*, the duty of the people to conform themselves to them *."

—You have artfully declined to say, *whom* you understand by its *pastors and governors*; but from other passages † it is evident you mean the *Bishops and clergy*; for the *civil magistrate*, you declare, *has no such power at all* ‡. Now,

I. That the *Clergy* have no power nor authority at all of this kind over the *Laity*, I proved beyond all doubt from the express command of our great Lawgiver.—*Call no man upon earth MASTER; ONE is YOUR MASTER, even CHRIST, and all ye are brethren* §. *The Princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion and authority over them, but it SHALL NOT BE SO amongst you* §. What have you said in answer to these texts? Not a single word. You leave them to stand in full force against

* Def. page 10.
page 18.

† Lett. II. page 14.

‡ Def.

§ Mat. xxiii. 8, 9.

§ Ibid. xx. 25.

gainst you: And, without one text of Scripture to support this authority of the *Clergy* over the *Laity*, you go on to treat it as a thing indisputable and allowed: and labour hard in raising a pompous structure upon the sand. What you say as to the *kiss of charity*, has been considered above, page 29. Should even *this* be allowed to be a *merely ecclesiastical and prudential institution*, it will by no means establish the *authority* you claim for your *Pastors and Governors*; the orders, decrees, and appointments of those times being by the *common consent and suffrage* of the whole Church; in which the *Laity* had an equal, if not a far greater, share of authority than the *Clergy* *. But,

2. Your lodging this power in the *Pastors and Governors* absolutely contradicts *the articles* themselves. For as the XXth article claims it for the *Church*: So the immediately preceding article (XIX.) expressly defines what it means by THE CHURCH, viz. *A congregation of faithful men where the pure word of God is preached.*—'Tis to the *whole body* of the faithful, then, that this power of decreeing ceremonies, if any such there be, belongs: How then do you presume, Sir, to wrest it from *them*, and to vest it solely in the *Clergy*? And,

3. When you add, *that to this right of the Pastors to decree ceremonies, it is the peoples duty, ordinarily, to conform themselves*: The word, *ordinarily*, seems thrown in as a mist to darken the point; a seasonable *salvo* to which to retreat when you feel yourself pushed. What mean you, Sir, by *ordinarily*? How shall the people know *when* it is, and *when* it is not, their duty, to submit to these

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* Vid. Exam. of the Codex, page 120.

injunctions of their spiritual Governors? Are the people *themselves* to judge, *always* to judge, of the fitness and expedience of the enjoined ceremonies; or are they not? If they are not; then they are *absolutely* to resign themselves to the direction of their Governors; which is palpable and gross *Po-pery*, and leads directly to *Rome*. But if they are; then the *Babel* of Church-authority is at once over-thrown: For then the authority resides no longer in *the decrees* of the Governors, but in *the judgment* of the people. 'Tis the judgment *they* form of them, which *alone* makes them binding upon them, or not. Of *their number*, whether they are too many; and of *their nature*, whether they are superstitious, foppish, and vain, you seem sometimes to allow, *the people* are to judge: But if they have a right *to judge*, they have a right also *to act* in consequence of that judgment; and to withdraw from those Churches where such ceremonies are enjoined, as *they think* foppish and vain; and to join themselves to others, where *they think* the worship of GOD performed in a more scriptural and proper manner. So then, the solemn parade of *Church-authority*, you see, turns out a mere shadow. 'Tis an authority to command, which no one is under obligation to obey. This power of *making ceremonies* must be either limited or unlimited: If it be not *unlimited* (which you seem to disavow) Pray! *what* is it limits it? *What* prescribes its bounds, *beyond which it shall not pass*? If the Church has power to ordain *five* ceremonies, why not *ten*? And if *ten*, why not *more*? Who shall pretend to say *how far* it may go?

Your illustration "*as to the King's injunctions,*" &c.* will not reach the case; because the constitution

* Def. page 14.

tution and laws of *England* empower the King to make such injunctions : But you have not yet proved, and I presume never will prove, that the constitution of the *Christian Church* empowers its Pastors to decree ceremonies and rites.

You ask *—“ Where does the Church pretend
“ to be alone the proper judge, or where disallow
“ private Christians to judge for themselves in
“ these matters?” I will tell you, Sir, in its
XXXIVth article, which decrees, that *whosoever thro’ his PRIVATE JUDGMENT, willingly and purposely doth openly break the traditions and ceremonies of the Church, which be not repugnant to the word of GOD, and be ordained by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly (that others may fear to do the like) as he that offendeth against the common order of the Church, and hurteth the AUTHORITY of the MAGISTRATE. Private judgment, you see, is here forbid to oppose the common order of the Church, and the authority of the Magistrate ; and when it presumes so to do, is to be censured and punished for it.*

“ The Church of *France*, and the Church of
“ *Rome*, you acknowledge, to be as much possessed of this power as the Church of *England* :
“ But it does not follow that because they have a
“ power to decree rites, that they may therefore
“ decree *fopperies* and *superstitions* †.”—But by what mark, I pray, do you distinguish betwixt rites and *fopperies* ; betwixt ceremonies and *superstitions* ? The consecrating of ground in the *Church of England* is a rite ; but the consecrating of water in the *Church of France* is a *foppery*.—The Priest’s signing the baptised infant with the sign of the cross,

* Def. page 13.

† Ibid. page 11.

in token that it shall confess a crucified Christ; is a *significant rite*: But his putting his finger into its ear, in token that it shall hear the word of GOD; or salt upon its tongue, in token that its speech shall be seasoned with salt, are *intolerable fopperies*.

—Can you help blessing yourself, Sir, in the refinement and delicacy of such distinctions!—The bowings to the altar, bowing at the name of *Jesus*, kneeling at the communion, sponsors, surplice, hoods, lawn-sleeves, and every thing of this kind, used in the Church of *England*, are *edifying* and *decent* ceremonies, “*of clear signification and indisputable use* *.” But the slippers and staff, knocking on the breast, elevations, crossings, gesticulations, sprinklings with holy water, &c. practised in the Church of *Rome*, are *ridiculous superstitions*.—How happy to have Governors thus spiritually gifted; able to distinguish betwixt things that differ!

“My suggestion, that by the mere concessions of your XXth article thousands of proselytes have been gained from you to the Church of *Rome*, is rash, you say, and groundless: Nor do you believe I can name *one* who was ever gained by it †.”——I will give you two instances almost equal to a thousand. The *first* shall be the renowned *Chillingworth*, who was gained to the Church of *Rome*, chiefly by this argument, *viz.* *The necessity of an infallible living judge of controversies ‡*: Which is but a different expression for the *authority of the Church in matters of faith*. Now if this argument was so plausible as to vanquish, and lead captive so great a master of reason, multi-

* Def. page 11.
Chillingworth, page 7.

† Ibid. page 15.

‡ Vid. *Life of*

multitudes of weaker minds have, no doubt, fallen by its force. The other shall be King *James II.*, of whom Bishop *Burnet* says, he gave me this account of the *change of his religion*.—"All due care was taken to form him to a strict adherence to the Church: Amongst other things much was said of the *AUTHORITY of the Church*; and of the tradition from the Apostles in support of *Episcopacy*. So when he came to observe that there was more reason to *submit to the Catholic Church*, than to *one particular Church*; and that other traditions might be taken on her word, as well as *Episcopacy* was received amongst us; he thought the step was not great, but that it was *very reasonable* to go over to the Church of *Rome* *." See how dangerous a weapon is this same *Church-authority*: And how capable of being used to the infinite prejudice of the Protestant cause!

"But granting this authority of the Church, (*i. e.* of its Pastors and Governors, its Bishops and Clergy) How, you ask, would our *reformation* be overthrown by it; which was not carried on in opposition to authority, but with the concurrence of all the authority in the nation †?" Strange, Sir, you should so soon forget! Did not I remember you that the *reformation* under Queen *Elizabeth*, and the present forms of worship prescribed in the *Common-prayer*, were strongly opposed by *every Bishop* in the kingdom; and the *Convocation* then sitting, were so far from having *any hand in it*, that they presented to the Parliament several propositions in favour of *Papery*, directly

* *Burnet's Hist. of his own Times*, Octav. Edit. Vol. I. page 194.
 † Def. page 15.

directly contrary to the proceedings of the Parliament? The *Civil Magistrate*, you affirm, *has no power at all, nor authority in these matters* *. They are the *Pastors* and *Governors* of the Church, in whom alone it is lodged. But behold, these *Pastors* and *Governors* were zealous for the old religion! They argued, voted, petitioned strenuously for it, and against the *reformation*. The *reformation*, then, upon your principles, is built upon a wrong bottom: Was carried on, not in concurrence with, but in avowed opposition to, *all the authority of the nation*. How justly might I here return your own ungenerous compliment, *It was great rashness (too great in conscience) if indeed it was not TREACHERY and PLAYING BOOTY, to set the Protestant cause upon so sandy a foundation* †. Your principles, if digested into proper form, will stand thus.—“The Church hath power and authority to decree ceremonies and rites: But by *the Church*, observe, I understand, not the *King* and *Parliament*; not the *civil Magistrate*; who have no power at all relating to these matters; but the *Bishops* only and *Clergy*, who are appointed and called of God to be its *Pastors* and *Governors*: But remember, my countrymen, the Common-prayer, and forms of worship now established and used amongst you, were introduced into this Church, not by *the authority*, no, nor yet by *the consent*, of the *Pastors* and *Governors* whom God had set over it, but in direct *opposition* to them. It was a *change* brought about entirely by the *Civil Magistrate*; who had no authority to effect it. It was therefore really no other than an ecclesiastical

* Def. page 18.

† Ibid. page 19.

“ *fiastical* rebellion, an unjustifiable revolt from
 “ the only *rightful* Rulers and Governors of the
 “ Church in its spiritual concerns.”——

This, Sir, is the plain language and tendency of your principles ; though I know you have been so wise as to contradict them again, by allowing,
 “ *that if Church-Governors will not come into such*
 “ *reformation, as is according to GOD’s word, but*
 “ *obstinately persevere in maintaining their sinful*
 “ *errors and corruptions, the people may reform*
 “ *themselves* *.”—— But this *concession* overthrows your whole scheme of *Church-authority* ; makes THE PEOPLE the *supreme* and *ultimate* judges, as to points of faith and rites of worship ; brings down the decrees of the most numerous and most holy Councils, Convocations, and Synods, to stand at the bar of *every man’s* private judgment ; and vests him with *authority* to receive or reject them, as to *himself* shall seem fit. So powerful is truth, which will prevail !

But your positions as to the *Civil Magistrate*, deserve a more distinct and accurate consideration. “ He has no power at all to decree rites in
 “ *divine worship* †—This power is not in the
 “ King and Parliament, for in this very article
 “ (XX.) which, together with the rest, is con-
 “ firmed by act of Parliament (13 *Eliz.* c. 12.)
 “ and thereby made a part of our ecclesiastical
 “ constitution, they have plainly owned it to be
 “ in *the Church* ; and no body imagines, that by
 “ the Church they meant *themselves*. The King
 “ and Parliament then have plainly disowned any
 “ such power in themselves, and have recognized
 “ it to be in the Church ‡.”——This, Sir, is a doc-
 trine,

* Def. page 13. † Ibid. page 18. ‡ Ibid. page 17.

trine, of dangerous and important consequence, and quite contrary to fact. For,

1. As 'twas the *Queen* and *Parliament* alone, without, yea in opposition to, the *Bishops* and *Convocation*, which decreed the present form and worship of your Church, and to their authority alone it owes its very being, birth, and support; by affirming that they had *no power* nor *authority of this nature*, you knock down and demolish the *Church of England* at once, and lay it prostrate in the dust. And,

2. That the King and Parliament by acknowledging this power to be in *the Church*, have not *disclaimed* it, nor put it out of their own hands, is incontestible hence, that they have at the same time expressly told you, what they mean by *the Church*; not the *Bishops* and *Clergy*, but the *congregation of the faithful*; of which congregation *themselves* are not only a part, but the *principal* and *ruling* part: And accordingly, our laws and constitution have vested the *supream power* of prescribing ceremonies and rites, *only* in them. I ask you—By *what authority* do the rubricks of the Common-prayer, bind the *Clergy* to obedience; or *whence* is it, they are *obliged* to observe the rites and forms prescribed in that book? Is it not *entirely* by the authority and act of *Parliament*? As for the Pastors and Governors to whom you *appropriate* this authority (the *Bishops* and *Clergy*) they have no power, by our constitution, to make one single law, to decree one rite, or to prescribe one ceremony. When assembled in Convocation, they are absolutely under the controul and direction of the *Civil Power*. “ Even the very subjects of their enquiry and debate, as well as the extent of their ordinances in point of obligation, are
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“ prescribed by *Statute Law*; that they cannot so
 “ much as *attempt* any canons or constitutions,
 “ without a royal licence; and that none of their
 “ ordinances are binding, even against the private
 “ Customs of a single parish *.” How is it then
 you affirm, *the King and Parliament to have dis-*
owned any such power in themselves, and to have re-
cognized it to be in the Church? But,

3. The point is if possible, still rendered more
 clear from the XXXIVth article above cited;
 which says, *If any man through his private judg-*
ment, openly breaks the ceremonies of the Church,
ordained by COMMON AUTHORITY, he shall be
openly rebuked, as one who offendeth against the com-
mon order of the Church, and hurteth the AUTHO-
RITY OF THE MAGISTRATE.—The *Autho-*
rity of the Magistrate, then, is indisputably con-
 cerned in *ordaining* these ceremonies: And your
 Church, Sir, however loath you are to hear it, is un-
 doubtedly a *Parliamentary* and *Civil* constitution;
 made, formed, supported entirely by the *Civil*
Magistrate, and by him alone is it capable of be-
 ing thrown into a new form.

But you ask, “ Are not the Dissenting Churches
 “ in the same sense *Parliamentary*? Do they not
 “ depend entirely upon an Act of Parliament, the
 “ Act of Toleration †?” No; the Dissenting
 Churches were formed, subsisted, and grew *with-*
out and before, any Parliamentary authority. We
 are thankful to the excellent and good government
 under which we live, for the Act of Toleration.
 But, would humbly beg leave to say, we derive
 not our power to assemble for divine worship, nor
 our Ministers theirs to officiate in such assemblies
 from

* Examinat. of the Codex, page 114.

† Def. page 21.

from any *human law*, but from our *natural right* as men, and from the authority of CHRIST. The Act of Toleration only protects us in the enjoyment of this right.

"But above all things you marvel, that whilst I was making this push at the Church of *England*, I did not reflect how much *I laid myself open*: For if there was ever upon earth a *Church*, which could properly be called *Parliamentary*, it was the *Presbyterian*, in the time of the *grand rebellion* *." What you call the *grand rebellion*, Sir, a *British House of Commons*, since the Restoration, call a *vindication of their just liberties*; and brought one of their members, *Lenthal*, upon his knees at the bar, and there sharply reprimanded him, for presuming to reflect upon it in the manner you have done †. Besides, if it was a *grand rebellion*, the shame and reproach of it falls chiefly upon the *Church of England*; the *Parliament* who began it, consisting almost entirely of members of that communion, as Lord *Clarendon* himself owns. But, what if the *Presbyterian Church* established afterward by them was truly *Parliamentary*, how have *I laid myself open*! Had I said or suggested any thing at all relating to *that Church*, or the proceedings of *those times*? Not a single word: but, for aught I had said, it appears not but I as much condemn that *establishment* as yourself. How then have *I laid myself open*! Are you, Sir, the gentleman, that reproves me for *ramblings*?

You put the case ‡, "that any of our Dissenting Churches, or the Church of Scotland, should
F 2 " by

* Def. page 20.

† Def. pages 23, 24.

‡ Journal of the 12th of May 1660.

“ by an Act of the general Assembly ordain, that
 “ a decent bason, with clean water, should be
 “ provided, and placed near the pulpit, that so
 “ the Minister taking the child in his arms, may
 “ conveniently pour or sprinkle water upon its
 “ face, in the name of the Father, &c. Here
 “ are several rites ordained, which Christ in his
 “ wisdom did not think proper to ordain, and
 “ one of them at least as exceptionable as any ex-
 “ cepted against in our Church, *Sprinkling*—
 “ What will this gentleman say to such an ap-
 “ pointment?” I will say, Sir, that if compli-
 ance with this injunction be made a *necessary term*
 of receiving baptism in that Church (as the *Cross*
 and *Sponsors* are made *necessary* in yours) so as that
 no child shall be baptized, that is not *sprinkled* from
 such bason; and the parent that desires to have his
 child *dipt* (believing *that* to be the only way in
 which Christian Baptism ought to be administered)
 shall not have it done; in that case, Sir, I will say
 the Church acts a tyrannical, unjust, schismatical
 part; and if I could have my child baptized in any
 other Church, constituted upon a more *Catholic* and
Scriptural plan, I should think it my duty to apply
 to it on that occasion. The spirit of ceremony-
 making and church-tyranny, is of a restless and
 inroaching nature, and ought *timely* to be crush-
 ed. ’Twas from such *little beginnings*, the mass of
Romish fopperies grew up to its present enormous
 and oppressive heighth.

“ The *natural rights* you represent some of our
 “ fellow-subjects as submitting to be deprived of
 “ by disqualifying laws, without going about to
 “ *turn the world upside down for their repeal* *,”
 are vastly too *trivial*, to be compared with those

* Def. pages 6, 7.

of which Dissenters are deprived: nor are they disqualified as to these, upon the account of *conscience* and *religion* (the hard case of Dissenters) for acting as we think the authority and laws of GOD indispensibly oblige us: Nor finally, can the persons you mention, perhaps be properly said to have a *natural right*, to sustain at the same time two different characters, and to execute two offices which are generally inconsistent and interfere with each other—So the cases are not parallel. Besides, why are we represented as *turning the world upside down*? Have we ever kindled tumults, raised mobs, demolished houses, threatened courts (as you know, Sir, who have done)—under a seditious cry, that our *Churches were in danger*? We appeal to the impartial world, for the *loyalty* and *peaceableness* with which we behave.

You pass over, by your own confession, *almost half my pamphlet** unremarked; in which the constitution of the Church of *England* is compared with that of the Church of CHRIST, and they are incontestibly shewn to be *societies* of a quite different, and even opposite nature; so as that a person's separation from the *one*, does by no means imply his separation from the *other*. Your replying nothing to this, you will give me leave to impute to some other cause, than “*your not observing any thing in it, which pretends to refute or contradict any position advanced in your letter.*” Is not the charge of *Schism* your favourite and constant topic? But, if I prove the *two societies* so entirely *different* in their constitution and frame, as that my not communicating in the *former*, does in no wise break me off from, nor in the least in-

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interrupt

* Def. page 37.

interrupt my communion in the *latter*; is not this a *refutation* of one of the principal and most interesting parts of *your letters*? And did not justice to your argument demand, if you could have given it, a proper reply?

“ ’Tis growing mighty modish, you complain, “ with our people to laugh at all notions of Church communion, and to make nothing of the most “ unnecessary separations *.” Yes, I thank God, the loud peals you were wont to ring us upon the head of *Schism*, are generally treated with pretty much neglect, not only amongst our people, but even amongst your own. For when one sees grave gentlemen setting themselves up for *Rulers* and *Governors* in the name of the LORD, claiming power to forgive sins, to decree ceremonies, to make laws, and to determine points of faith; and then thundering out their anathemas, upon such as refuse to submit to their authority.—What must this provoke, in all sensible spectators, but a mixture of contempt, indignation, and mirth?

Can these *spiritual Fathers*, in their consciences, believe *our SCHISM* to be so horrid and so damning, and yet refuse to drop the ceremonies which they see to be the *stone of stumbling*, at which we so grievously and wickedly fall! What! for the sake of a few things which they own to be *indifferent*, will they harden themselves against the cries of so many perishing misguided *Christians*, and *destroy the souls for which Christ died*! Forgive me, Sir, if I cannot think it; but that *Schism* is only used as an *ecclesiastical scarecrow*, to keep the simple in awe; and to establish a sacerdotal empire over ductile and weak minds.

“ All

“ All Christians, you affirm, living within the Church of *England*, which is co-extended with the kingdom, may be truly said to owe it obedience and submission; and are *de jure*, whether they will be or not *de facto*, true members and subjects of it *.” But pray tell me: Is not the *Church of Scotland* equally co-extended with that kingdom, as the *Church of England* is with this? And do not all who live within its pale, owe it like submission? Is not the *Presbyterian* discipline and worship as much established there, as the *Episcopal* is here? If it be *Schism* then, and a grievous sin for Dissenters to withdraw from the established Church in *South-Britain*, is it not *alike* schismatical and wicked in your *Episcopal* brethren to withdraw from the *Presbyterian* Church established in the *North*? Whence is it we never hear from you any solemn admonitions to your brethren beyond the *Tweed*, of the detestable sin of *Schism*; warning them of its damning nature, and exhorting them speedily to unite with the established Church! Here your grave lectures may possibly have good effect; and if you really thought *Schism* so grievous an offence as you affect to represent, 'tis strange you never try the power of your persuasions with your brethren in the *North*. This would be a noble proof that you were in earnest, and sincere. But whilst, amidst your warmest harangues against the *English* separation, you encourage and support the dissent from the *Scotish* Church; what can be thought of your outcries about *Schism*, but that they deserve a name more severe than I am willing here to give?

F 4

Your

Your notion of our being "*true members* of the Church of *England de jure*, tho' we are not, " and will *not be de facto*"—is a refinement, indeed, and quite surpasses my comprehension. I thought it entered essentially into the idea of a Church, that it is a *society of VOLUNTEERS*: A company joined together in certain acts and professions by *common CONSENT*: And that *without*, much less *against*, his own agreement and consent, no man could, with truth, be stiled a member of any Church. All persons living in Christendom may be said to owe *Jesus Christ* obedience and submission, with infinitely greater reason than all the people of *England* can be said to owe it to the Church: But does it therefore follow, that they are all *de jure*, if they will not be *de facto*, TRUE members of the Church of *Christ*? What, those who openly renounce *Christ*, declare him an impostor, and utterly disavow obedience and subjection to him, can *such*, with any truth or propriety, be stiled *true members* of his Church! Strange Divinity indeed! *Christ's Church* then, instead of a congregation of faithful persons, may now be defined a society of impious blasphemers, of infidels and profane persons, who neither fear *GOD*, nor believe in *Jesus Christ*; these all may be declared and treated as *true members* of his Church. If this, indeed, be right, then with some pretence it may be said, that those who openly renounce and disclaim the Church of *England*, and declare they will not live in any subjection to it, may yet be considered as *true members* of it.

I owe allegiance to the *King of England*, because I receive protection from him, and enjoy innumerable *civil* blessings by means of his government, under which I *consent* to live. But it does not hence

hence follow, that I owe subjection to the *Church of England*, (as you argue, page 29.) from whom I receive no protection, enjoy no benefit nor advantage, and in communion with which I by no means *consent* to live. **CONSENT**, Sir, is indispensibly and essentially necessary to form the relation betwixt pastors and people: And without this *consent* no Church in any Christian or scriptural sense can possibly be formed. *Dissenters* therefore can with no justness nor propriety in the world be stiled *true members* of your Church. Your solemn excommunications of them is really a casting such out, as never were in it: So the miracle still remains.

As to our *posture* of receiving the Lord's-supper, instead of ingenuously owning your great *misrepresentation*, you seek by frivolous and quaint questions to raise a dust to conceal it. As, "what meaneth this *informant*, by *some* of their Churches, which have admitted kneeling? What by *some* in their Churches? If there were any considerable number, &c.*" Their number, give me leave to tell you, Sir, is nothing to the purpose, 'Tis the **LIBERTY** they have to do it, is the only point in debate. If all have this *liberty*, tho' not one in five thousand should actually use it; my point stands firm, yours is overthrown; and you stand convicted before the world of having given a very wrong and injurious account of us. You rashly asserted that *sitting* among us was **NEVER** *allowed to be departed from*; that our *Ministers* **INSISTED** upon, and **REFUSED** to abate it.—This, from my own certain knowledge, from the information of others, from

F 5

Baxter's

* Def. page 32.

Baxter's reformed Liturgy, I proved to be a false representation. In the second edition of my Letter, (page 21.) I added a passage from *Dr. Calamy's brief Account to the German Divines*, which expressly says,—*The Communicants amongst PROTESTANT DISSENTERS are AT LIBERTY to use their OWN POSTURE in the time of receiving; tho' a table-posture is most commonly used. Note.* To this *brief Account*, &c. you appear to have been no stranger; you had, doubtless, read it; for you quote a long passage from it (Lett. II. page 62.) not *four lines* distant from that I have now cited. How then could you take upon you so roundly to affirm—that it is NEVER ALLOWED to be departed from, &c. When you had seen it declared to the world that our *Communicants were AT LIBERTY to use their OWN POSTURE*!

But, if this deserves an ingenuous blush, I am called upon to blush with you; “For having said that Christ and his Apostles, without all peradventure, *sat around the table*, when every body knows, who knows any thing at all, that they used the *recumbent* posture, which is no more sitting than it is kneeling *.”—If my assertion cannot be supported by indisputable authority, I have a blush at your command. Let my vouchers be heard. *St. Matthew* † says, *he SAT DOWN with the Twelve.—And as they were eating JESUS took bread, and blessed it.* *St. Mark* ‡, *As they SAT and did eat, JESUS took bread, &c.* *St. Luke* ||, *When the hour was come, he SAT DOWN, and the twelve Apostles with him: And he took the bread*

* Def. page 31.

† xxvi. 20.

‡ xiv. 18.

|| xii. 14.

bread and gave thanks. If I am now to be corrected for representing *Christ* and his Apostles as SITTING around the table, the weight of the stroke will fall entirely upon the *Scriptures*; under which patronage I am safe. I make no manner of doubt, Sir, but the posture was *sitting*; though with the body, perhaps, a little *leaning* or *reclined*. Nor would our language afford our translators any better, or indeed any other, word than *sitting*, to express it by. Pray, how would you render it—*As they RECUMBED and did eat.*—And when the hour was come, he RECUMED with his twelve Apostles? If every body, “*who knows any thing at all, knows they used the recumbent posture,*” then good Mr. Henry knew nothing at all; for, he says, “*He sat down in the usual table-gesture; not lying on one side, for it was not easy to eat, nor possible to drink in that posture, but sitting upright, tho’ perhaps, sitting low:*” Or rather, as Dr. *Lightfoot* tells us, the posture was, sitting on a couch, leaning the left elbow on the table.

My account of the constitution of the Church of England, of the regal supremacy, and of the proceedings of the Convocation in the affair of Mr. *Whiston*, you call *misrepresentations**; but I observe you are so prudent as not to offer a single word in proof of their being such.

Your representing me as having a great zeal for *Arianism*, and being fond of these new notions†, for which I had given not the least real occasion, is an artifice so low, that you must give me leave to look down with great pity upon it; not doubting but:

* Def. pages 37, 38.

† Ibid. pages 38, 44.

but I have both an *advocate* and an *avenger* in your own bosom.

There is something truly extraordinary in your affirming——“ That the *damnatory clauses* of the “ *Athanasian* creed may be as safely subscribed, “ without any explanatory declaration, as the *bely* “ *Scriptures*; at least such passages, as *He that* “ *believeth not shall be damned*——*He that* “ *believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the* “ *wrath of GOD abideth on him* *, &c.”—As much as to say, You may as confidently assent to the decisions of a weak and fallible *man*, concerning the *everlasting state* of multitudes of his fellow men, as to the decision of the omniscient and infallible GOD.—Or thus, because GOD hath fixed *some* terms for a man's entrance into life, therefore *man* may take upon him to devise and fix *others*.—Or thus, because CHRIST had authority to pronounce, that no man who received not the *Gospel*, which he preached, should finally be saved, therefore *Athanasius* (if he was its compiler) had authority to pronounce, that no man who believed not the *creed* which he had made, should attain eternal life, but should *everlastingly perish*.—Are these conclusions just?

I cannot think myself to need your forgiveness, Sir, for asking, “ whether *you* were amongst the “ weak and uncharitable minds, who damn to “ the pit of Hell, all who cannot receive all the “ dark and mysterious points set forth in the *Atha* “ *nasian* creed.”—For does not that creed most *peremptorily* pronounce this damnation on *all* such? Are not *you* a zealous advocate and admirer of that *creed*? Do you not *yourself*, thirteen times a year in the presence and Church of GOD, and as his

Minister

Minister and Ambassador, declare solemnly to the people, *That whoever does not keep WHOLE and UNDEFILED the faith therein delivered, he shall WITHOUT DOUBT perish everlastingly?* Where then is the wrong of my asking, *Whether you are amongst the weak and uncharitable persons?* &c. For if you are *sincere* in its use, and do really believe what you solemnly tell the people, when you read to them *that creed*, you must, surely, be content to be reckoned in that number. For how to reconcile, a solemn declaration that certain persons, *WITHOUT DOUBT perish everlastingly*, with *HOPES of their salvation*, is what no wit of the subtlest Jesuit is able to perform.

The subscriptions of our Ministers, with the protestation they made against the *damnatory clauses*, can with no truth, I apprehend, be called “a *pro- testatio contra factum*, nor a subscribing assent “ to the truth of certain propositions, at the same “ time declaring they do not assent to it*.” For it really amounted to no more than this—“ I believe the articles of this creed, and think it agreeable to the word of GOD; but I here publicly declare, I do not consider the *damnatory clauses* as any part of the creed, nor give my “ assent to them.” As for the subscription of our present Ministers, if it be not done under a claim of the benefit of this *protestation* made by their predecessors, or with some such *protestation* made by themselves; I freely own, Sir, I cannot justify it, and think it a thing which ought not to be done,

SUBSCRIPTION to *human creeds* have, I apprehend, been of infinite disservice and hurt to the Christian Church; have rent it into a variety of sects and angry parties, and filled it with innumerable

* Def. page 41.

table strifes and debates : They are a *fence*, raised around the Church, which can possibly keep none but *virtuous* and *honest* persons, but never can one *hypocrite*, one *heretick*, or *wicked man*, from entering into it. I wish the case you mention may not be extremely common, *viz.* *Fraudulent and insincere subscriptions, and the constant use of forms, which they who use them do not approve of, whereby the conscience is defiled* *.

But the point of *subscriptions* which is the subject of your *Appendix*, will be considered by an *abler hand* ; who will give you, I hope, ample satisfaction on this head : To his instructions I commend you, Sir, wishing you with great sincerity, abundant peace and truth.

* Def. page 44.



T H E

THE

Dissenting Gentleman's

THIRD and LAST

LETTER, &c.

S I R,

I HAVE read carefully your *two Defences*, and attentively weighed the reasons by which you further press my *conformity* to your Church; but must still say, that though I feel the attraction of *worldly interest* strongly operating with your arguments, and giving them great force; yet there is something more forcible which draws a contrary way.

Were I to never live but in the present world, I would soon become your convert: But when I consider that the *purity, simplicity, and liberty* of the GOSPEL, are a *sacred DEPOSITE* committed to my trust; and that there is an *allegiance* I owe to CHRIST, as the ONLY Lawgiver of the Church, for which I must surely be accountable before him; I cannot but think it my *duty*, and therefore, upon the whole, most certainly my *interest* also, to continue my *separation*, though attended

attended with some worldly disadvantage and reproach.

The grounds of my *dissent* I have already layd before the world, to whose impartial consideration they are humbly submitted. “ But I have left un-
“ noticed and untouched, you complain, a great
“ part of your Letters.” This, indeed, I have done, and shall also of your Defence; a great part of both being futile, and of little moment to the merits of the cause before us. Debates of this kind, I knew, insensibly swell. I remarked therefore, but upon a *few* of the *many* obnoxious passages with which your Letters abound, that greater liberty might be left to present you with several strong, and to me unanswerable, arguments for dissent from your Church, which you had artfully forborn to mention; and which, tho’ since held up before you and peculiarly urged upon you, you turn gravely away from, and will not be provoked to encounter their force.

I have pressed you with the *constitution* and *frame* of your Church; and have shewn you various points in which its structure and form was not only quite *different from*, but actually *repugnant to*, the Church of JESUS CHRIST; consequently, that it was not, could not be, any *dangerous* and *damnable Schism* for the servants of *Jesus Christ* to separate and withdraw from it, as you had rashly affirmed. But to this *popular and great plea* you have made no reply at all; it stands before you in full strength.

This charge of *Schism* is still rendered more completely *ridiculous*; by observing,——That the very powers which *alone* formed, and which *alone* govern your Church, have given us leave to *withdraw* from it. The *very AUTHORITY* which
made

made your Church, and upon which *alone* it rests, hath allowed us to set up our *separate* Churches for worship; and hath taken those Churches, and the worship performed in them, under its immediate protection and care.

S E C T. I.

Of Church Power, and in whom lodged.

THE issue of the debate betwixt the *Church* and the *Dissenters*, I have frequently reminded you, and every attentive person sees, depends absolutely and intirely upon this single point — Is there any *other* Lawgiver or King in the *Church of GOD* besides JESUS CHRIST; or, is there not? Is there *power* and *authority* vested in any man or body of men on earth, to make and to injoin *new rites* of Christian worship, and *new terms* of Christian fellowship, besides what CHRIST, the *only* Lawgiver, hath *himself* made and enjoined; or, is there not? Could you but be engaged to give a *plain* and *direct* answer to this *one point*, it would soon end the debate. But for reasons best known to yourself, yet very obvious to the world, you are deaf to my repeated solicitations on this head; and will not, cannot be either *persuaded* or *provoked* to speak your sentiments freely and openly upon it.

You strenuously contend that *there is such a* POWER; but are greatly at a loss, 1. *Where* to place it? And, 2. *How* to limit and confine it? These are *two things* which it indispensibly lies upon you to *fix* clearly and to *ascertain*; before you can, with any grace, censure our *separation* as unjustifiable and wrong. But tho' in multiply-
ing

ing words, your talent is not common, and you expatiate diffusely upon things of little moment; yet *here*, where the point lies, and you *saw*, and even *felt* it, you artfully endeavour to evade. However, with much difficulty, a few concessions are extorted from you, which, in part, shew the world your preposterous scheme, and which prove you to be really (as I shall presently shew) no *advocate* for, no *friend* at all to, the true *Church of England*, the Church established *by law*; but to be a *betray*er, an *oppugner* of it, a dangerous *underminer* of its very basis and foundation; and that, if your principles take place, it must presently be overthrown, and its hierarchy and frame be utterly destroyed.

For, with regard to the *first* of the above points, *viz.* In *WHOM* this *power* of making and enjoining *new* ceremonies and rites of worship, and *new* terms of communion in the Church of *Christ*, is vested——You affirm, 1. “*That 'tis NOT in the CIVIL MAGISTRATE; he has NO SUCH POWER at all*.*” But, 2. “*'Tis in the PATRONS and GOVERNORS of the Church†.*” Now,

FIRST, If it be *NOT in the CIVIL MAGISTRATE*; and *HE has*, as you affirm, *NO SUCH POWER at all*; the consequence is inevitable, that then the present *established Church of England* is illegally, unjustly, tyrannically *established*: That it is an *usurpation* upon the rights of Christians, and upon the civil liberties of mankind; and that the very *basis* on which it stands, with its whole *frame* and *constitution*, are fundamentally, essentially and notoriously *wrong*. For,——That the present

* I Def. pages 18, 19.

† Ibid. page 10.

present *Church of England* was constituted, formed and established by the *Civil Magistrate*, and ONLY by him, viz. by *Q. Eliz.* and her Parliament, every gentleman, not a perfect stranger to our history and constitution, indisputably knows. When we talk of the *Church established by law*; by what law, I pray, do we mean established? Is it not by a law enacted by the *Crown and Parliament*, and enacted by no authority or power but theirs? Is not the *Act of Uniformity* the grand pillar or foundation on which the *Church of England* rests? Was it not *that* alone which established its present liturgy, with all its ceremonies and forms? But by *whom* was that law made? Was it not by the *Civil Magistrate*; and made by him alone; the *Bishops* in the House of Lords, and the *Clergy* in Convocation, labouring earnestly against it.—To say then, as you do, that the *Civil Magistrate* has NO POWER to decree ceremonies and forms of worship, is to say that the *Act of Uniformity* was a tyrannical unrighteous act: that it was enacted by *those* who had NO POWER at all to do it; consequently, that the *Church* established by *that* law was an unwarrantable establishment, a spurious illegal thing.—This is the destructive tendency, Sir, of your principles and scheme. You root up foundations, overthrow our constitution, and demolish totally the very *Church* you seem zealous to defend; so that you never spoke, perhaps, a truer word than when you were pleased to describe yourself as a *serry advocate for the Church* *.

But

* Defence, page 128. Your learned WARBURTON in his *Alliance*, &c. honourably and frankly owns, “*That the Church hath resigned her INDEPENDENCY, and made the MAGISTRATE her SUPREAM HEAD; without whose approbation and allowance she* can

But you ask,—“Why are we to regard only the establishment of Queen *Elizabeth*? Why is King *Edward*’s reformation overlooked *?” Not for any advantage which you can possibly get by it. For in the *reformation* under that Prince also, “*The majority of the Bishops and inferior Clergy* (directly contrary to what you assert) *were on the side of POPERY †.*” And it was the *Parliament* alone, without the *Convocation*, which established the reformed Liturgy and Service-book then.

But at Queen *Elizabeth*’s reformation, when the present Church was formed, erected and established, you alledge,—“Though the *Bishops* did, indeed, in some of her first years oppose the *reformation*, which they had before approved, yet they did not long stand out—†.” That the majority of the *Bishops* did either *before approve*, or *afterward comply*, is, I believe, quite repugnant to fact ||; but whether true or not, is not at all to the purpose: For when the *reformation* was actually accomplished, and the Church with its *Liturgy* and *Forms* was established; their standing in or out afterward,

can direct, order and decree nothing, page 87. And that the Clergy are now under the MAGISTRATE’S direction, page 74.

Accordingly, an Act in the 2d Parliament of *Charles II.* in Scotland, to which all the *Bishops* concurred, and none of the Laity protested against it, enacts,—“That the discipline of the external government and polity of the Church is in his MAJESTY and his successors, as an INHERENT RIGHT of the crown; and that they may settle, enact and limit such constitutions, acts and orders, concerning the administration of the external government of the Church and the persons employed in the same, and concerning all ecclesiastical meetings, and matters to be proposed and determined therein, as they in their ROYAL WISDOM shall think fit.”

* II Def. page 140.

† Neal’s Hist. Purit. Vol. I.

pages 45, 51.

‡ II Def. page 140.

|| Only one Bishop conformed himself to the Queen’s commands, and was continued in his place, viz. *Kitchin of Landaff*. Fuller’s Ch. Hist. Book ix. page 59, and Book vii. page 414.

ward, for a longer or shorter time, makes nothing for your point. The work was done *without them*; this is all I ask; this you are forced to grant. The Bishops then had *no hand, no share* at all, in making and establishing the present Church of England; but with all their might *opposed* it. It was done by the *Civil Magistrate* (who had NO POWER, you say to *do it*) and done by him *alone*. "At her Majesty's accession, and even after religion was restored to the same state as under King EDWARD, the UNIVERSITIES were so entirely lost, that there were scarce TWO of the same opinion with the reformers. As to the Bishops and Clergy (Bishop Cox adds) they were UNANIMOUS for POPERY, firm as a rock.

—————Stat Clerus Totus,
Tanquam dura silex aut stet Marpesia Cautes *.

"But if the reformation was carried on, it was not, say you, *perfected* without the Bishops †." True, because it was never perfected at all. That glorious work remains to immortalise, perhaps, the name of its present Governors. But to whatever *perfection* it hath been at all brought since its first establishment, it was brought *only and entirely* by the authority of the *Crown and Parliament*; our excellent constitution acknowledging NO *legislative* power or authority but *theirs* ‡.

" And

* Neal's Review, &c. page 58. Vide also Fuller's Ch. Hist. Book ix. page 56.

† II Def. page 139.

‡ Synods and Convocations have in all ages of the Church seldom done good; often much hurt; have generally obstructed, not promoted *reformation*; which hath mostly been carried on by LAY-Councils and Hands. The sentiments of a learned *Father*, who had seen much of these Church-proceedings, may be not unworthy to be

“ And as for the XXXIX articles, these, you
 “ alledge, were some years after passed in a Con-
 “ vocation of the Bishops and Clergy *.” Whe-
 ther they were passed in a Convocation or not, with
 regard to their *authority*, is of no moment at all,
Their unanimous assent adding not the least grain to
 their obligation on the subject; nor *their most zealous dissent* in the least detracting from it. But did
 not your heart smite you, Sir, at the very men-
 tion of *these ARTICLES*; the XXXIVth of which
 declares expressly *against* you,—*That your Church-
 ceremonies were ORDAINED by the authority of the
 CIVIL MAGISTRATE.* The same also your
 XXXth canon †. You have several times sub-
 scribed the truth of this *article*, and sworn to this
canon. With what countenance then durst you
 thus publicly *oppugn* and *contradict* it; and in
 open defiance of our *articles* and *statutes*, our *con-
 stitutions* and *canons*, and your own repeated *sub-
 scriptions*, presumptuously declare, — *That the
 CIVIL MAGISTRATE has NO POWER nor
 AUTHORITY AT ALL to decree ceremonies in
 religion?* Do you solemnly subscribe one thing, and
 publicly teach another! Where is the consistency
 and

be here remembered. *Sic sentio, si verum scribendum est, &c.* My
 opinion is this, if I may be allowed to speak the truth; that all Con-
 VENTIONS of Bishops are to be avoided. For I never saw any good
 come of any SYNOD; nor that it did not much more mischief, than it
 hindered. For truth, in such assemblies, is generally born down by a
 spirit of strife and vain-glory. Greg. Nazian. Epist. ad Procop.

* Ibid. page 140.

† “ We hold it the part of every private man, both Minister
 and other, reverently to retain the use of the ceremonies prescribed
 by public authority; considering, that things of themselves indiffe-
 rent do, in some sort, alter their natures, when they are either
 commanded or forbidden by a lawful MAGISTRATE; and may
 not be omitted, at every man’s pleasure, contrary to the LAW.”
 Canon. xxx.

and conscience of this? But let us see where you lodge *this power*.

SECONDLY. They are the *Church's* PASTORS and GOVERNORS, *whom you are pleased to invest with it* * ; that is, I suppose you mean (for you are extremely shy of explications) *its* BISHOPS and CLERGY. But you have not deigned to shew me one *text* of Scripture, nor one *Statute* or *Act* of Parliament, which vests them with *this power*. I have shewn you several of *both*, which expressly divest them of it, and utterly deny them any such *jurisdiction* or *authority* at all.

But, for once, we will grant you,—*That these* PASTORS and GOVERNORS *have authority from* GOD *to make* NEW *ceremonies and rites, and to ordain in* CHRIST'S Church *NEW Terms of Communion*.—Tell me, then, is this POWER vested *solely* and *only* in the BISHOPS; or, must their Deans and Chapters act in concert with them? Has *every Bishop*, within his diocese, this *power* from GOD to injoin new ceremonies and rites; or, may his *Archbishop* controul him? This latter, I suppose, not: For *Archbishops*, you own, not to be of *apostolic*, but of *modern* institution; whereas *Bishops*, it should seem, are the *lineal* successors and representatives of the Apostles; in whom therefore the *apostolic* power of governing the Churches rests. *This* then, which is of *divine*, ought not to be controuled by *that*, which is but of *late* and *human* institution.—The *Bishop*, then, of every diocese, as its *Pastor* and *Governor*, has authority from GOD to decree in his Church what ceremonies and rites soever, and to make what terms of communion he thinks edifying and fit. Nor has any neighbouring Bishop, no nor any power upon earth,

* I Def. page 10.

earth, authority to controul him. For as the APOSTLES were all *equal*, so must their successors, the BISHOPS, also be: And as the former were not *accountable* to any *temporal* Prince for their jurisdiction in the Church of CHRIST, the same exemption also may their descendants and representatives claim. How excellent a scheme of government and holy discipline this! With what beauty and uniformity, unity and peace is it calculated to bless the Church! as we shall presently see. But,

THIRDLY. Acknowledging this *high power* to be really vested in the Church's *Bishops*, as GOVERNORS and PASTORS of it. I again ask, How FAR does it extend? Is it *limited* or *unlimited*? May they injoin *whatever* rites THEY think decent and ornamental; and decree *whatever* ceremonies or new terms of Communion THEY judge conducive to the edification of the Church? As they have now, in the Church of *England*, decreed we will say, *four* only, to give *additional beauty and splendor* to its public worship; may they not, if they think it conducive further to this worthy end, decree *four*, or even *forty*, more? Yes, and make that *forty*, four hundred, if they happen to think them *useful*, and to promote *decency* and *order* in the worship of their respective flocks.— But do you not plainly see, Sir, how *dangerous* a power this! A *power* which, in all ages, hath proved the *bane* of the Christian Church! A flood-gate which hath let in an horrible and filthy deluge of animosities, corruptions, and superstitions upon it! Hence sprung that enormous mass of profane and foolish rites, which, to the scandal of the *Christian* name, now grievously oppress both the *Greek* and the *Romish* Churches. One good Bishop,

or perhaps junto of Bishops, taking it into his head that there ought to be a *trine-immersion* in baptism; another the *signation of the cross*; another an *unction with oil*; another *milk and honey*, and *imposition of hands* immediately after it; another *insufflation* or breathing upon the person's face to *exorcise the Devil*; another *washing of hands* before prayers——thus praying towards the *East*; *sponsors* in Baptism; *kneeling* at the Lord's-supper; first the veneration, then the adoration of *relics*; *images* erected, first only as *memorials*, thence quickly sliding into *objects* of religious worship: Thus, I say, that inundation of abominable corruptions, which at present overwhelms both the *Greek* and *Romish* Churches, gradually came in at this very breach which you are now zealously maintaining, namely, the *Bishop's POWER to decree rites and ceremonies in the Church*.

'Tis a most *dangerous* and *important* POWER; not fit to be trusted, and therefore, we may be assured, never was trusted with any *fallible* *uninspired* men. JESUS CHRIST, surely the SUPREME *Bishop* and ONLY *Head* of his Church, well knew what *institutions* were most for its edification; and what *ceremonies* and *rites* would best promote the order and decency of its worship; and either by himself, or by his inspired Apostles, has left a *perfect plan* of both. For any weak and *uninspired* men therefore to rise up in after ages, and fancy they can *improve* the scheme of worship which CHRIST hath left; that they can add greatly to its *beauty*, its *splendor* and *perfection* by some ceremonies of their own, is, to be sure, a *bold invasion* of CHRIST's *throne*, which every sober Christian ought highly to detest.

But with great acuteness you observe, “ That
 “ though those CHURCH-GOVERNORS have
 “ power to decree *ceremonies* and *rites*, yet not
 “ *fopperies* and *superstitions*.” This is extremely
 pleasant ! But when I ask you, by what criterion
 to distinguish *rites* from *fopperies*, and *ceremonies*
 from *superstitions*, you will not, and no wonder,
 satisfy my *curiosity*. For I defy all the common
 sense and ingenuity of the nation (to borrow one
 of your own expressions) to shew the *consecration of*
earth to cover the body when *dead* to be an edify-
 ing and decent rite ; but the *consecration of water*
 to sprinkle it when *living* to be a ridiculous and
 foolish foppery. I defy any man upon earth to say,
 why *spittle* and *salt* in baptism are not as instruc-
 tive ceremonies as the *sign of the cross* ?——And,
 why a bishop has not as much power, according
 to ancient custom, to *exorcise the Devil* before bap-
 tism, as to *lay on hands* after it (as you say he does
 in *confirmation*) to impart the graces of the *Holy*
Ghost.

SUPERSTITION, Sir, is ever restless, insatia-
 ble, incroaching : Every good Bishop will be am-
 bitious of adding some rite or ceremony of his own
 to *beautify* divine worship and render it more bril-
 liant. Thus, when your holy Bishop *Laud* was
 Governor of this Church, you had lighted candles
 upon its altars ; copes of mass Priests with cruci-
 fixes and images of the Trinity upon them ; conse-
 crated knives to cut the sacramental bread ; in-
 cense pots ; canisters for wafers lined with cambric
 lace,——with a deal of other furniture all *solemn-*
ly CONSECRATED for the service of *Almighty*
 GOD, and for the comfort, instruction, and edi-
 fication of his Church ; to exalt and enliven the
beauties of holiness therein. And had it not been
 for

for the noble and heroic STAND against this rite-making spirit, which the Puritans and their successors have all along made, there is little reason to doubt, that the Church of *England*, by this time, had fallen little short in these *holy decorations* and *additional splendors* of the Church of *Moscow* or of *Rome*.——

I have dwelt the longer upon *this*, because it is, undoubtedly, the *capital* and *fundamental* point on which the debate betwixt the *Church* and the *Dissenters* entirely turns. Prove your Church, Sir, to have this *power* and *authority* from GOD, which she exercises and claims, a *POWER* to *decree new rites and ceremonies in Christian worship*, to make *new terms* of Communion, and to *determine controversies of faith*,——and you need give yourself no farther trouble; all *other things* in controversy, sponsors, absolution, the sacramental test, and every other thing shall immediately be given up. Make good but this *one point*, and if your Church commands us to sign ourselves *all over* with a significant and instructive *cross*, we will reverently do it.——If it bids us worship towards the *East*, and to think the *omnipresent* DEITY to be more *there* than in the *West*; and to bow at the name of *Jesus*; we will humbly submit;——or, if it requires us to believe, that an amorous *Devil* was forced away from his beloved maid by the fumes of a fish's liver; or that the vilest wretch that lives, if the King gives him a post, has a *right* to eat at the *Lord's table*; and that when he dies he *rests in* CHRIST, and is *taken to* GOD in *mercy*; we will roundly believe it all. There is *nothing* your Church can *injoin* or *decree* but you shall find the Dissenters dutifully submitting to it, when you have once clearly shewn it to have *this POWER* from GOD;

and have told us plainly, and without reserve, *what* you mean by *the* CHURCH; and have distinctly pointed out *WHO* *the* persons are in whom this power resides.

But it is pitiful and low trifling, Sir, and indeed consummately ridiculous—to talk of the “CHURCH’s *jurisdiction and authority over*” “*Dissenters,—of the subjection we owe*” “*IT,—of the DAMNABLENESS of the sin of*” “*refusing obedience to IT—*.” When you have not, durst not, cannot openly and plainly tell us *WHO* and *WHAT* it is you mean by the *Church*? Or *WHO* the persons are to whom *GOD* hath committed this high and important trust?—Is it the King and Parliament; or, is it not?—Is it the Clergy met in Convocation; or, is it not?—Is it each Bishop in his respective diocese; by himself alone, or in conjunction with his Clergy; or, is it not?—Is it the whole body of Christian people, the congregation of the faithful; or, is it not? Open yourself freely, Sir, and don’t be afraid of TRUTH. TRUTH will never hurt you; it is a most innocent and lovely thing; it may rob you of some *emoluments* and *possessions* of a worldly nature; but be assured it will give you *SOMETHING* more substantial in their stead. Be ingenuous then, and tell Dissenters—in *whom* *GOD* hath lodged this *POWER* to which *they owe subjection*, and by revolting from which they are guilty of a *dangerous and damnable* sin. If you write again, but will not explain yourself *distinctly* on this point, you yield the cause to us before the world. You make it evident that you write neither for *OUR*, nor *your own* conviction; but that you have *something* else in view besides *finding out* TRUTH. That *something*, perhaps, you may find; but it will continue
with

with you but *for a moment*; whereas, if you *find*
and do the WILL OF GOD, it will give you a
possession that will endure FOR EVER.

S E C T. II.

Of the SACRAMENTAL TEST.

THAT the law called *The TEST*, is not, as you suggest, the *innocent occasion only*, but the plain, the notorious, the *culpable cause* of those prostitutions of the *Holy SACRAMENT*, which, you say, you *see with CONCERN*; what room can there be for any rational doubt? For does not the very design and intent of that *law*, at least as 'tis now applied, prostitute and pervert the *Sacrament* to an use not only *different* from, but directly *repugnant* to, THAT for which it was instituted and designed by JESUS CHRIST? The *Christian law* enjoins it as a mean, and with intent, to *unite* and *coalesce* Christians. The *Test-law* enjoins it as a mean, and with intent, to *discriminate* and *divide* them. For the *Ministers* of JESUS CHRIST then to be advocates for a *law* which prostitutes and perverts an *holy SACRAMENT* of his religion; yea, a law which makes THEMSELVES the very *instruments* and *tools* of this shameful prostitution; is such a violation of their character; such a prostitution of their sacred office, such a betraying the *solemn trust* committed to them by GOD, for which they must give account to the *Chief Pastor* at his coming, as cannot but greatly shock an attentive beholder; and as should give, methinks, extremely painful apprehensions to themselves.

“ These *prostitutions*, you assure us, *you do see*
 “ with CONCERN; but yet cannot be for the
 “ REPEAL, because you think it *inconsistent* with
 “ the preservation of the CHURCH*.” What
 Church alas! must *that* be, which cannot be pre-
 served but by an acknowledged prostitution and
 perversion of an *holy Sacrament*! Sure, not the
 Church of CHRIST. Let not Christians *do evil,*
that good may come; such carnal and corrupt po-
 licy ever defeats itself; and its *condemnation is*
just †.

You correct me for saying,—That by the force
 of this law multitudes of needy persons are *compel-*
led to come to the Lord's-table, and cry,—“ GOD
 “ forbid! that the temptations even of poverty
 “ and want should be esteemed to have the nature
 “ of force and compulsion,—for in that case
 “ they would have *no guilt at all* upon their con-
 “ sciences.” So then; you can bring off, I find,
 the young *adulterer* from any guilt with his *lewd*
woman, Prov. vii. 21. because *with the flattery of*
her lips she FORCED him. I thought I had writ-
 ten to a *Batchelor of Divinity*, to a gentleman who
 was no stranger to *Scripture* language, and who
 knew what is meant when the *King commands his*
servants to COMPEL the guests to come in, Luke
 xiv. 23. For the like use of the word *compel*, you
 may please to consult Galat. ii. 14. vi. 12. See
 also Luke xiv. 18, 20. in the original.

That the *Priest* has no power to *refuse* the
 Lord's-supper to the *vilest* person that demands it
 as a qualification for a post, you care not to admit,
 and ask,—“ Is there *any law* which forbids the
 “ Curate to repel him from the *Lord's-table* †?”

Yes,

* II Def. page 8.

† Rom. iii. 8.

‡ II Def. page 3.

Yes, by equitable construction of the law called the *Test*; most certainly there is: For the *same* law which requires, under severe penalties, all persons in posts to *receive* the Lord's-supper according to the usage of the Church of *England*, does, by indisputable consequence, require some one to *give* it. If it *must* be received by them, it *must* surely be given to them. To suppose the *Legislature* to have *obliged them*, under heavy pains, to partake of the holy Sacrament; but to have *obliged none*, upon their demand, to administer it to them, is to suppose it acting a most *absurd* and *unjustifiable* part; which is not to be imagined. *Who* then is the person to whom, according to law, a man that wants the *sacramental* qualification is to apply for that service? Undoubtedly his *parish Priest*; who is appointed and paid by law for the performance of the several offices which the *State* requires of him; of which *this* is plainly one. Whatever power therefore the rubric gave the Curate to *repeal open EVIL LIVERS from the table of the LORD*, before the *Test-act* took place, in cases of *qualification*, it is now unquestionably *superseded*, and the rubrick virtually *repealed*. For when a new law enjoins what is repugnant to an old, that old law is to be considered as so far set aside. And as for the "*Damages to which the Priest is liable to be condemned for refusing the Sacrament*," these the law, 'tis presumed, will give according to the *loss*, which the person can make appear he hath sustained by that refusal; which in many cases may be great; more than the Priest is worth.

"The *Oath of Abjuration* you esteem quite a parallel to the *Sacramental Test*; and urge, that if one should be repealed because it lays men under violent temptations to prostitute their

“ consciences; so also ought the other *.” No, the cases, if duly weighed, will be found to differ widely. An OATH of *fidelity* to the government that employs us in posts of influence and power is a *security* or *pledge* evidently founded in the reason of things; it has been the practice immemorial of all civilized nations: Its necessity, or great expedience, manifestly arises from the nature of civil government; it is therefore reasonably presumed to be the *will* and *institution* of GOD the author of civil government; and was instituted for purposes of a *political* or *civil* kind. Here is no *profanation* then, no *perversion* of this *sacred RITE*, when the *oath* is tendered to a man at his entrance upon a post of trust; and if a needy *Jacobite* takes it, to the pollution of his conscience, *himself* only can be blamed: The *law* that ordered it is clear. But, can any of this be said concerning the SACRAMENTAL Test? Hath THIS been an instrument for the support of *civil government* in the greatest, most flourishing and wisest empires of the earth? Hath GOD, the *author* of civil government, given the least intimation of his intending it such a guard? Had CHRIST, the *institutor* of this rite, the least *intention* or *design* that it should be *thus* used and applied; be made an engine and tool of *State*; an instrument to *discriminate* betwixt Christian and Christian; to lift *some* to posts of power in the kingdoms of this world; and to lay upon *others* (men *equally* virtuous) brands of odium and disgrace? Had he not unquestionably a quite CONTRARY design? You know, Sir, that he had. Does he look then with pleasure down, think you, upon the Kingdom and Church, where he sees his *name* and his *institutions* thus openly violated,

lated, perverted, profaned; his *Priests* liking to have it so; approving, espousing, defending the ABUSE? I own, I cannot think it: and should any man express a fear, that *this* is not the least of those *national SINS* which expose us to *divine* displeasure; that it is a public violation of that *RIGHTEOUSNESS* and *PIETY* which alone can exalt a people; a blemish, a disease which preys upon the body politic; and, if it does not threaten its dissolution, yet greatly impairs its strength.— I confess, I could not prove his fears to be *superstitious* or *weak*. For if the Church of *CORINTH* was *severely chastened* for not making a due distinction betwixt the *Sacrament* and their *common meals*, and not eating it *AS the LORD's Supper*; I see not but the Church of *ENGLAND* may have something also to fear, for those *perversions* and *prostitutions* which, you own, you see with *CONCERN*; for its using this *Sacrament* not only *not according to*, but directly *against* its primitive institution; to a *purpose*, and for an *end*, which quite *opposes* and *subverts* one principal design for which our *divine Master* appointed this *SACRED RITE*.

High offices and court employments, I have acknowledged, might be apt to corrupt *Dissenters*; as every one knows them to have this influence upon the human mind; though as a *Briton*, therefore, and a *Christian* I wish earnestly the *REPEAL*, yet as a *Dissenter* I profess no solicitude about it. “ But I ought not then, you say, so *strenuously* to plead for their being admitted to such employments, but to be very solicitous *against* it.” Review, Sir, in less haste, and you will find, I am so far from pleading *strenuously* for their admission to such employments, that I have not so much as pleaded for it *at all*. All I plead

for is, the removal of the *incapacity* under which they *unjustly* lie; the breaking a disgraceful yoke which the *Test* hath put upon their necks; and the restoring them to their *native* freedom, and honour, and right. That the *State* may have liberty, if it thinks it needs their faithful services, to avail itself of them; and that it be left to their *liberty*, their *virtue*, their *choice*, either to accept or refuse posts of trust under the government; and that they may not stand branded and stigmatized before the world as persons *incapable* and *unworthy* of such trusts*.

S E C T.

* In the late excellent COMMENT on Warburton's Alliance, &c. the passage of my *second Letter*, to which this refers, is not only mistaken, but not faithfully and exactly quoted. In the *Letter* it stands thus, pages 74, 75.—“*Though I think THIS LAW a most unrighteous restraint upon us, and an undoubted violation of our natural rights; yet I am far from being persuaded that its REPEAL would be of the least service to our interest at DISSENTERS. I doubt, and have often thought, there is too much truth in what you say, that high trusts and court-employments would be extremely apt to corrupt us; and that it would really rather injure than strengthen our interest. I have never, therefore, as a DISSENTER, been at all solicitous for the REPEAL.*”

Note, This is expressed only as a *doubt* or *suspicion*; but the author of that COMMENT hath made it say in positive and strong terms (page 123:) “*That a repeal of the TEST and CORPORATION Acts would REALLY be injurious to the interest of Protestant Dissenters; or, that I am persuaded it would rather injure than strengthen our interest.*” Which is giving the passage a very different turn.

And when that gentleman asks,—“*Is there an absolute incapacity of being virtuous in high stations?*” I answer, No: But if there be a *great danger* of being *vitious*; this will justify surely an *indifference*; a *no solicitude* about them; and will excuse, at least, a *doubt*, a *fear*, as to the event. And when he further asks,—“*Would any man think his conduct justifiable, should he refuse a large estate merely, because of the greater danger of his being corrupted by it?*” I answer, 1. There have been instances of such

refusal

S E C T. III.

Of our CONSTITUTION in Church and State.

YOU seem a little displeased at my *doubting*
 “ Whether the *Church* were an essential and
 “ an half part of our CONSTITUTION? and
 “ whether *Church and State* here in *England* are
 “ so incorporated and united as that, like the mar-
 “ ried pair, they must stand or fall together? and
 “ alledge, that in all the conversation as well as
 “ in the writings of *Dissenters* and others, we read
 “ and hear continually of the *ecclesiastical* as di-
 “ stinguished from the *civil constitution*: Yea, even
 “ from the throne and both Houses of Parliament
 “ we

refusal recorded, and, perhaps, justly, as instances of heroic virtue.
 But, 2. TO REFUSE it *when offered*, is a thing extremely different
 from being SOLICITOUS to obtain it. Public offices and trusts,
 when offered by those in power, ought not to be refused by such as
 think themselves capable of rightly discharging them; because this
 would be to reject an opportunity of *public service*, to which their
 country calls them. But this may be done without a *solicitude* to pro-
 cure them.

The passage on which th's ingenious author has stepped aside to
 remark, speaks but the very same sentiment which himself has else-
 where, perhaps more strongly expressed. *Comment, &c.* page 138.
 “ An *indifferency* to the honours, riches and pleasures of this world,
 “ a contempt of and victory over them, is the *independency* and su-
 “ premacy which the true Religion and Church can boast; the re-
 “ signation (or loss) of which must be infinitely dangerous to her,
 “ her poison, her death wound.”—Again, page 131. “ Though
 “ it may be thought I am pleading for the introduction of Prote-
 “ stant *Dissenters* into places of profit and trust, I am fully persuad-
 “ ed that their having such places would not make them more re-
 “ ligious men, nor from numbers of them so employed would
 “ their societies appear with greater reputation as religious socie-
 “ ties.”—

“ we often hear of our constitution in *Church* and “ *Statè* *.” But divest yourself, for a moment, of *worldly attachments*, which insensibly warp the mind, and you will see it, I believe, to be a very *rational doubt*. For our *ecclesiastical*, however commonly distinguished by sounds, I have fully proved in my *first Letter* (page 19—29, to which you have not presumed to make the least reply) as also in the beginning of this Letter, to be really no other than a *civil* constitution; a *system* or *frame* contrived, disposed and enacted by the CIVIL MAGISTRATE; as much as the constitution of the *Treasury*, of the *Army*, or of the *Courts* of *Westminster-hall*. These all, Sir, have their *constitutions*, (that is, their several parts of the public business assigned them to dispatch, and their several officers and forms and methods of proceeding in them) as really, as truly, and as much as the *Church*. The *ARMY* is the *constitution* and order of the *civil* Magistrate relating to the direction of the military force. The *TREASURY* is the *constitution* and order of the same magistrate relating to the collection and disposal of the public monies. The *COURTS* of *Westminster-hall* are the *constitution* of the same magistrate for the dispensing public justice. And the *CHURCH* is the *constitution* and order of the same magistrate relating to the manner in which the public worship is to be performed. The officers in *each* are ALL entirely *made, instructed, controuled* by the power of the CIVIL MAGISTRATE: ’Tis by *his* authority alone they are all qualified and impowered to act in their respective stations; and ’tis in *that manner*, and by *those rules* only which *HIS wisdom* hath prescribed,

* Lett. I. page 11. II Def. pages 9, 10.

scribed, that in all their respective offices they severally proceed.

What you call then the *ecclesiastical* is really, you see, no other than a branch of the *civil* constitution; and what you call the *Church* is in truth no more an *essential*, much less an *half* part of our CONSTITUTION, than the *Treasury*, the *Army*, or either of the *Courts* of *Westminster-hall*. Should, now, the wisdom of the *Legislature* think proper to new-form any of these *constitutions*; for instance, the method of dispensing Justice in any of our *Law-Courts* (which *Courts*, by the way, are all of much longer standing than the constitution of our present *Church*) by which a saving would arise of vast sums to the public, and *Justice* be dispensed in a more *rational* and *easy* way: Would you not smile to hear some zealous gentlemen of the robe stand forth and insist,——*That these COURTS were an essential and an half part of the CONSTITUTION; and that therefore whoever moved for, or so much as wished, an ALTERATION in either of them, could not be safely trusted with any share of the public power, and was really in truth an enemy to the STATE—?* The learned gentlemen of that robe, Sir, no doubt, alike smile to hear you thus reasoning as to the *Church* *.

By

* That the account here given of the *nature and constitution* of the *Church of England* is quite agreeable to the sentiments of our first REFORMERS, the *Founders and Framers* of it, appears from the determination of a select assembly of them, convened at *Windfor* by *K. Edward VI.* by whom (as may be concluded from *Archbishop Cranmer's* manuscript) it was declared,

“ That all Christian Princes have committed to them immediately from God the *whole* cure of their subjects; as well concerning the administration of God's word for the *cure of souls*, as concerning the ministration of things *political and civil* governance.

In

By " the CONSTITUTION in Church and State, then, of which we often hear even in " speeches and addressees from; and to the throne," can be meant nothing else, than,——*that ORDER or FORM of government respecting ALL persons and things which is established by the laws and customs of this realm.* A CONSTITUTION, by which the King or QUEEN, as *supreme Head of the Church*, is the fountain of *all* power and jurisdiction therein; authorized to instruct, over-rule and controul all the *Archbishops, Bishops, and Priests* in this kingdom, in all their most SPIRITUAL and ECCLESIASTICAL concerns——A CONSTITUTION, by which a LADY, when such fills the throne, is impowered to *compose* public prayers for the Church; to stop all preaching therein; to fill vacant bishoprics with what persons she pleases, or not to fill them at all *; to direct all *Ecclesiastics* what

" In both these ministrations they must have sundry Ministers under them, to supply that which is appointed to their several offices.

" The civil Ministers under the King's Majesty in this realm be those whom it shall please his Highness, for the time, to put in authority under him; as for example, the Lord Chancellor, Lord Treasurer, Lord Admiral, &c.

" The Ministers of God's word under his Majesty be the Bishops, Parsons, Vicars, and such other Priests as be appointed by his Highness to that ministration; as for example, the Bishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Winchester, the Parson of Croywick, &c.

" All the said officers and ministers, as well of the one sort as of the other, be appointed, assigned and elected in every place by the laws and orders of Kings and Princes." [Vide an Extract from Archbishop Cranmer's M. S. Stilling. Iren. Part II. Ch. viii. page 391.

* Any of the Bishoprics may be kept vacant by the Princes of England, as those of Ely and Oxford were by Q. Elizabeth; the latter had no Bishop for 22 years. The Parliament dissolved the rich Bishops

what they *shall*, or *shall not* preach; and even in the most *abstruse* and *metaphysical* points to be the *final Judge* of HERESIE; whose judgment must stand, as to what shall, or shall not, be deemed HERESIE in this Church; even though it happen to *contradict* that of all her *learned CLERGY* in convocation convened.

Thus that renowned LADY Queen Elizabeth, in the fulness of her *ecclesiastical* power, HERSELF composed a *prayer*, Archdeacon Echard* informs us, for the use of a great number of her nobility and gentry, as well as her soldiers and sailors, in the expedition against Cadix, directing it to be *used daily in every ship*. And by virtue of her *Supremacy* she might, I presume, if she had pleased (and that any *future QUEEN* may) compose prayers for the use of the *Archbishops*, *Bishops*, and all the *Clergy* of the land; and injoin their solemn use every *Sunday* in the Church; and that the use of such devout FEMININE compositions, no *Bishop* nor *Priest* can agreeably to our CONSTITUTION, in any wise refuse.

The same *royal LADY*, by virtue of her proclamation only, put an entire stop to all preaching of Ministers and others throughout the kingdom; and the people were charged to *hear no other preaching or doctrine, but the Epistle and Gospel of the day, and the Ten Commandments, without any exposition or paraphrase thereon*. And should any *future QUEEN* think proper to do the same, I humbly apprehend, all her Bishops and Clergy are, by

Bishopric of Durham in King Edward VI's reign, and gave the profits to the Crown. And it had remained dissolved to this day, probably, had not Popish Q. Mary restored it.

* Hist. of England, page 367. Col. 1.

by our CONSTITUTION in Church and State, obliged to obey.

By the same constitution King Charles I. put forth a proclamation (if a WOMAN had worn the crown, *she* also might have done it; as any future QUEEN may) commanding the Clergy not to preach or dispute about *Arminianism*. The learned Bishop *Davenant*, presuming to preach upon the doctrine of *Predestination*, was forced to appear upon his knees before the Council; and being severely reprimanded, hardly so escaped: Though he alledged he had preached nothing but the XVIIth article of the Church of England. The KING, not only in his superior, but SUPREME ecclesiastic, wisdom told him,—"The doctrine of *Predestination* was too big for the peoples understandings; and that HE WAS RESOLVED not to permit that controversy to be discussed in the pulpit*."

What authority our constitution gives QUEENS to judge in points of HERESIE (the most deep and mysterious points) and to controul the proceedings of the most venerable and holy Synod, which the Clergy of this kingdom can possibly compose, has been observed in the case of *Whiston*, whom Queen ANNE, by her sole authority, skreened from the heavy censure of her learned Convocation. HER single judgment, in the balance of our apostolic and excellently constituted Church, being of far greater weight than that of the united Bishops and

* *Vide Fuller's Church Hist. Book IX. page 138.*

The same blessed Martyr, by his royal mandate only, without any trial, sequestered and suspended from the execution of his office good Archb shop Abbot, for refusing his licence and approbation to a most vile and scandalous sermon of *Sibthorp*.

and Clergy of the whole land. This you are pleased, weakly enough, to call *misrepresentation*; but might have seen the truth of it attested by two of your own learned and reverend Historians *Burnet* and *Tindal*, in their accounts of the year 1711.

Again, by our present *constitution* the King alone, or at least by consent of Parliament, hath undoubted POWER to divide the *twenty-six* Bishoprics, into which this kingdom is at present cantoned, into as many *hundred*; and thus to render them more like the Bishoprics of the *first ages*; when every Christian Bishop took the *oversight* of no more than he could *personally* know, and than could communicate at *one Table*; a POWER to new-frame the whole order of public worship; to abolish its present articles, ceremonies and forms; and to substitute none at all, or quite new ones, in their stead. A POWER to dispose of that part of the public treasure by which the *Clergy* are maintained in a more *equitable* and *juster* manner; and to reduce the shameful exorbitance, by which some members of that great, and in itself venerable and useful body, wanton in vast affluence, indolence and sloth, (which may be what you call *snugness*) whilst others more virtuous, laborious and learned wear away their lives in obscurity and want.—This, Sir, without question, is our present CONSTITUTION *in Church and State*.

S E C T. IV.

Of SPONSORS in Baptism.

YOUR defence of *Sponsors in Baptism* comes next to be considered. Here you affirm,—
 “ That I represent the use of sponsors as a very
 “ *mysterious point, as an unaccountable, inexplica-*
 “ *ble, absurd and unlawful thing* *.” An asser-
 tion hurried from you by the ardor of zeal, but
 quite without *truth*. The use of *sponsors*, in all
 cases of parents *incapacity*, I entirely approve; and
 expressly told you, *That in such cases the Dissenters*
also use them †. You could not, without extreme
inattention, but see, that it was “ *The SETTING*
 “ *ASIDE the parents; the FORBIDDING them*
 “ *to stand forth and engage solemnly for the religious*
 “ *education of the child; and the receiving the child*
 “ *to Baptism upon account of its OWN FAITH and*
 “ *its OWN PROMISE expressed by its SURE-*
 “ *TIES,*” that I thus represent. And though I
 have the pleasure now to find you tacitly giving
 up, though not honourably retracting, that precipi-
 tant expression, “ That godfathers are not an
 “ *useful* only, but even a **NECESSARY** *insti-*
 “ *tution,*” yet scarcely, without pain, can one see
 you grievously embarrassed in accounting for the
answers made at the *font*. These, you still insist,
 are not the *Sureties*, but the **CHILD**’s answers.
 But your attempts to explain, how a child who
cannot believe, does yet *profess faith*——! How
 the infant who in *no sense* can promise or en-
 gage;

* II. Def. page 24.

† Lett. II. page 42.

gage; does yet *really* and in *good sense* vow and engage——! How *the babe*, who has no thought, no purposes, nor desires, may yet express these by *the mouth* of its Sureties; and these expressions of what it *hath not*, and cannot possibly have, are accepted by the Church as a proper token that it *hath* them, and as a solid ground of Baptism——! This is still to me, and I believe to all the world, as inexplicable, mysterious, transcendent a thing as before you undertook to unvail and explain it.

Nay, the *mystery* grows upon you, by attempting to unfold it: For you declare, “That the *ground and foundation* of infants being received to Baptism, in your Church, is the promise of *GOD to believers and their seed* *.” Mind then, ’tis the *faith of the PARENT* that intitles the *child* to Baptism; but if the *ground* of its being received to this Christian Sacrament be the *faith of its PARENT* only, why do you receive it as if upon account of *ITS OWN faith*? Why interrogate the poor *BABE*——? *Dost THOU believe? Wilt THOU be baptised?*——Again, if the *PARENT’s faith* be that which intitles the *child* to Baptism; why is not *the PARENT* the person who stands forth to *profess faith* as a qualification for the Baptism of the *child*? Why is *the CHILD* called upon *vicariously* to declare, that *itself* believes, that *itself* desires Baptism, &c. when all the world sees that it neither *knows*, nor *does*, nor can in any sense at all *do* either of these things?

You endeavour to explain the matter “by an *infant* in the Lord of the Manor’s Court, who
“by

“ by his attorney is admitted to his copy-hold,
 “ and covenants to do homage for the same; or,
 “ by an Infant-King, who hath some one of the
 “ nobility who in his name and for his benefit is ap-
 “ pointed to take the coronation oath; and there-
 “ by oblige him to observe the laws and protect
 “ his subjects *. But these instances avail you no-
 thing. For,

1. The child, when admitted by his attorney in the Lord's Court to his copy-hold, *does not covenant* to do homage for the same. That he *does not covenant*, I prove by a very plain and incontestable argument, which is, that he *cannot*. There is no sense at all, no *religious* or *moral* sense, in which the infant can with any truth or propriety be said to *covenant*. No, 'tis the *attorney*, and he *alone*, that covenants to perform the homage. And in the case of a minor King, when one of the nobility takes the coronation-oath in his name or stead (if any such ceremony be ever performed) he does not, cannot in any sense *thereby oblige the royal infant to observe the laws and protect the subject*: Not whilst an *infant*; because, not being a *moral* agent, he cannot possibly be capable of *moral* obligation: And not when he comes of age; because the *promise* or *oath* of one rational moral agent, can never properly *oblige* another, if that other was not at all conscious of, nor gave his consent to it. The whole nature and extent of the *obligation* in that case is unquestionably this: The nobleman who takes the oath, as personating the King, and who during the minority is vested with the regal power, swears that *he HIMSELF* will, in the exercise of that power, observe the laws and

and protect the subjects. The obligation of this oath, which is made by *himself* only, can extend only to *himself*; and it lasts only so long as he continues vested with the regal power. But when the royal infant comes of age, and assumes the power into his own hands; he must *personally* take the oath; or some way or other *signify* his solemn assent to it, in order to his being laid under any *real obligation* by it. And then,

2. These cases also widely differ from that of the *baptized infant*, because in both of them there are several important *services* and *actions* to be done, (which *must be* performed by some one) whilst the *minority* continues. In the *first*, there are suits and services in the Lord's Court, and quit-rents to be paid. In the other, there are *acts* of regal power to be continually exerted for the due government of the people, even whilst the *infancy* remains. These, therefore, being indispensibly *necessary* to be done, and the *infant* being utterly incapable of doing them, hence arises a necessity of some person's undertaking to discharge these offices for him, and to act in the infant's stead. But, is there any thing like this in the case of *baptized infants*? Is there any *service* or *homage*, any *faith* or *vows* which GOD expects from them whilst their *infancy* lasts? You know there is not. If GOD then *expects* no such services from the *infant*, why are *Sponsors* called forth to pretend to *perform* them for him! And this when the pretence is in every view ridiculous; because in things of religion 'tis utterly absurd for one man to pretend to *promise*, to *repent*, to *believe* in the name of another.

One principal *design* of the Baptism of a child, you own, " is that some SECURITY be given;
" some

“ *Some solemn STIPULATION be made before the Church for its RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.*”

Who then, I pray, so proper to give this security, as *the person* to whom its education is committed? *Whom* should the Church bring under the engagement of a solemn *vow* or *covenant* for this purpose? *Strangers*, who, perhaps, never saw the child; or, who when the ceremony is past, will never see it more! Or *the parents*, in whose family it is to grow up, and under whose eye it is to be formed!

An *explicit* STIPULATION, in your Baptism of an infant, you do not pretend there is any but what the *child* (poor babe) *ITSELF* makes; “but” the Sureties by standing there, and receiving a “solemn charge concerning the religious education of the child are justly supposed to accept it*.” But do you not know, Sir, that this is no *stipulation*, neither explicit nor implicit. A stipulation is a *mutual* promise: But though the Sponsors stand there, and *bear* the admonition; no answer, no word, no token is required of them by which to signify their solemn purpose and engagement to obey it. Accordingly, when they return home, they too generally with great levity *shake off the charge again, and throw it over to the parent* †. And thus the solemnity of the institution dwindles into a mere trifling, if not ludicrous ceremony; and your boasted *double security* still remains no *real security* at all.

Dr. *Nichols*’s account of this apparently *absurd* and *mysterious* affair, to which I referred you, is to be sure far more defensible, though quite contrary to yours, viz. “Baptifatorum fidem religioſe

* II Def. page 36.

† Com. to the Temp. page 612.

“ in se recipiebant, eos sincerè omnia in Evange-
 “ lio revelata credere, & subsequentes vitæ actio-
 “ nes juxta Christi normam directuros esse *.”—

*That the Sureties religiously ENGAGED for the
 faith of the baptized, that they SHOULD sincerely
 believe all that was revealed in the Gospel, and di-
 rect the subsequent actions of their lives by the law of
 Christ. This you call MY translation; and tax
 me before the world “ for having WRONG
 “ TRANSLATED it to serve my purpose †.”*

It will give you, surely, some confusion and pain
 to be told, that *this* is not *mine*, but is the *Doctor's*
 own translation, or that of his learned friend who
 published his *Defence*, &c. And I appeal to the
 public, whether the *Doctor's* or *Your's* be the pro-
 per rendering of the words. Is *recipere in se fidem
 baptisatorum*,——*To make a solemn declaration and
 profession touching the faith of the baptized*——?
 Besides, the *Doctor* was too wise a person to re-
 present the *Sureties*, as you would have him, as
 making a solemn declaration that the infant DID
 sincerely believe all that is revealed in the Gospel—
 because this, he well knew, was what no wise or
 honest man could possibly declare concerning any
 infant upon earth. He knew it *absurd* to affirm,
 —*That the infant DID BELIEVE at all*; much
 more to affirm that it SINCERELY believed; but
 more even yet, that it sincerely believed ALL that
 is revealed in the Gospel.——Which ever way you
 view it then, 'tis all mysterious and recondite:
 And this business of the *Sureties* and their answers
 at the font, after all your pains to clear it up, is
 still covered with extremely dark and impenetra-
 ble clouds; which, till some new light shall arise,
 one

* Nich. Def. Part II. page 273.

† II Def. page 26.

one may venture to prophesy will never be dispelled: It turns the ceremony of your Baptism into little else than a *solemn trifle*; and furnishes to *unbelievers* matter of everlasting ridicule and contempt.

S E C T. V.

Of CONFIRMATION.

AS to the ceremony of *Confirmation*, you are still so wise as not to assert any *scriptural* or *apostolic* authority for its practice. But yet ask,—
 “ If both the *ordinary* and *extraordinary* gifts of
 “ the Spirit were communicated by the Apostles
 “ by *imposition of hands*, why may we not expect
 “ that the *ordinary* ones will be still communica-
 “ cated by the same administration? And why
 “ should we not continue that administration in
 “ the Church in hope and expectation of them *?”
 By these *ordinary gifts*, as you fully explain yourself, you mean, what are usually called, the GRACES of the Spirit, even the Spirit of LOVE and of a SOUND MIND. For you add, “ If this
 “ Spirit of Love and of a sound Mind was given to
 “ Timothy by imposition of hands in his ordina-
 “ tion; why may it not be done by the same cere-
 “ mony in Confirmation?” I am sorry there is a Protestant Divine in this kingdom capable of asking such a question as this. For, 1. This Spirit of LOVE and of a sound MIND ἀγάπης καὶ σωφρονισμοῦ, which you encourage us to expect from the laying on of the Bishop’s hands, is one of the sublimest GIFTS conferred upon the human race by the Gospel

Gospel of CHRIST. A GIFT which far excels an *ability* to speak with tongues, a *faith* that can remove mountains, a *power* to cast out devils, to heal all manner of diseases, or even to raise the dead. — The *Spirit of LOVE and of a SOUND MIND* far excels them all; and yet *this*, it seems, we may now expect by the *laying on* of the Bishop's hands! Blessed *Episcopacy* indeed, if it carries with it *such gifts*! But how foolish and wild the claim, if neither *scripture* nor *reason* lend it the least support! For,

2. Because *this GIFT* was conferred on *Timothy* at his *ordination* by the laying on of the *APOSTLE's hands*; does it follow, that the *same Gifts* may be expected in *Confirmation* from the hands of our present *Bishops*? Is there power in their Lordships fingers to convey so divine a *blessing* to the head on which they rest? You should know, Sir, that the learned prelates of this Church *abhor* the presumptuous claim: They pretend to no such power. Why then will you *officiously* presume to claim it for them? And why amuse the world, and give *infidels* room to scoff, by the use of a solemn *ceremony* for the conferring these *Gifts*, which no mortal man hath now power to bestow? The age is critical and discerning. For the honour of the Christian *name*, therefore, and the dignity of Christian *Bishops*, all claims not clearly founded on scripture or reason, and all offices and rites not evidently supported by them, should at the least be silently dropt.

The only *rite*, after *Baptism*, which I find either *instituted* or *practised* by CHRIST and his *Apostles*, “to make a public *recognition* of baptismal engagements in the face of a Christian congregation,” is the celebrating the *Lord's-supper*.

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By *this* Christians are openly to profess themselves the subjects and followers of JESUS CHRIST; to recognize the baptismal covenant; to *shew forth that death* by which he purchased them to himself; and in the most public and solemn manner to lay themselves under fresh and most sacred obligations to live obedient to his laws.—Here then are *all* the ends which can rationally be proposed in the use of *Confirmation*, a human invention, more effectually and better answered in that of the *Lord's-supper*, an undoubted institution and command of JESUS CHRIST. With the *emblems* of their Saviour's *Body and Blood* in their hands, the *recognition* they HERE make of their engagements to an holy life is vastly more solemn, the motives to obedience more powerful and constraining, and they are CERTIFIED of GOD's *favour and gracious goodness to them* by a *TOKEN* incomparably more important than the laying on of the *Bishop's hands*.—If you ask, “What is this to those who dare not offer themselves to the Sacrament *?” I answer, such have equal reason not to offer themselves to *Confirmation*; the same *faith* and *sincerity* which are requisite to render a person a proper subject of the one, make him also a worthy communicant in the other.

That this ceremony of *Confirmation* is no part of genuine and primitive CHRISTIANITY, there are few, I suppose none, of our learned Bishops and Divines, but perfectly know. *Tertullian* is the most antient author in which mention of it is found. But by *his* time, 'tis well known, a great variety of *superstitions*, and ridiculous and foolish rites, were brought into the Church. And you

are

are also, I presume, not ignorant that *Confirmation* was then always performed (not as it is with us, but) *IMMEDIATELY after Baptism*, as it is now also throughout the *Greek Church*, and all the Churches of the *East*. A due regard to this will lead you to the true meaning of that expression in your office, which you are so embarrassed in clearing up; where the Bishop declares to GOD, *That he hath vouchsafed to regenerate these his servants by water and the Holy Ghost, and to give them the forgiveness of all their sins.* An expression taken, probably, from some *antient Liturgy*; and which was suitable and well adapted to the practice of those times, but is utterly *incongruous and unsuitable* to ours.

For then, as Dr. *Cave* observes*, “ Though “ infants were undoubtedly taken into the Church “ by Baptism, yet the main body of the baptised “ were *adult* persons; who, flocking over daily “ in great numbers to the faith of *Christ*, were “ received in at this door. Usually they were for “ some considerable time *catechised*, and trained “ up in the principles of the *Christian* faith; till “ having given testimony of their proficiency in “ knowledge, and of a sober and regular conver- “ sation, they became candidates for *Baptism*.” Or, as a greater author † says, “ The *Catechu- “ mens* enjoyed not the privileges of the *faithful* “ till they had, in a sense, merited them; which “ was when, thro’ a considerable time of trial, “ they had evidenced the sincerity of their hearts “ by the sanctity and purity of their lives: And “ then, as *Origen* says, *We initiate them in our* H 2 “ *mysteries,*

* Prim. Chris. Part I. pages 194, 208.

† Inquiry into the Constitution, &c. Part I. page 102.

“ *mysteries, when they have made a proficiency in*
 “ *holiness, and according to the utmost of their*
 “ *power have reformed their conversation.* When
 “ they had changed their manners and rectified
 “ their irregular carriage, then they were washed
 “ with the *water of Baptism, and NOT BEFORE.*
 “ For, as *Tertullian* observes, we are not bapti-
 “ sed, *that we may cease to sin; but because we*
 “ *have ALREADY ceased.*” Now when this was
 the case, and immediately after Baptism Confirma-
 tion was administred, there was some decency and
 propriety in the Bishop’s or Presbyter’s (for Presby-
 ters also then confirmed) addressing Almighty God
 as having *vouchsafed to regenerate these his servants*
with water and the Holy Ghost, and to grant them
the forgiveness of all their sins. But how different,
 alas! (vastly different) the case at present is with
 the multitudes who flock to our modern confirma-
 tions! How *rude and unserious* they rush to re-
 ceive this *episcopal* grace! In how perfunctory
 and slight a manner the ceremony is performed.
 What riot and disorder frequently concludes the
 day——! is too obvious to the world; and
 would seem, perhaps, *invidious* if set in its proper
 light.

Your laboured apology for the Bishop’s making
 that very *weighty and solemn declaration* over a *pro-*
miscuous assembly, which is supposed to include
 many vitious and corrupt persons, is effectually
 overthrown by your own just *concession*,——“ that if
 “ he was, indeed, to declare to each individual
 “ person, *by himself*, that GOD had regenerated
 “ him in particular with the *Holy Ghost* and for-
 “ given him all his sins, it would be a different
 “ case.——Such a person might be tempted there-
 “ by to entertain *better* thoughts of the state of his
 “ soul

“soul than he had reason for, and to *delude* himself with *deceitful hopes* *.” Behold this, in effect, indisputably done! For *each* individual person, after having heard this solemn declaration pronounced over *himself* in common with all the rest, is presented *separately* by his parish Priest; and kneeling before the Bishop, feels his *consecrating hand* resting upon *his head*, and hears HIMSELF distinctly and personally *certified* (ASSURED from the *Bishop’s* mouth) that THIS is a *TOKEN* of *GOD’s* *favour* and *gracious goodness* to him in particular. What now, I ask, is the obvious, the *natural* construction which the person puts upon all this! Why surely, unless he thinks the whole solemnity a farce; and that the *Bishop* and *Priest* (his spiritual guides, whose *lips* are to *preserve knowledge*, and who are to be the *mouth* of *GOD* to him) have conspired to put a dangerous cheat upon *his soul*, he must strongly conclude *his soul* to be in a happy and safe case; in a state of *favour* with *God*; and a partaker of that *forgiveness* which his *gracious goodness* hath promised in the gospel of *Christ*.—Whether the continuance of *this ceremony*, in its present form of administration, be either for the honour of the *administrator*, or for the benefit of the *Church*?—Whether it hath not an apparent tendency to cherish a *delusive hope*, and to speak peace to *such persons* as are not, by the *Christian* covenant, entitled to *peace*? I with all humility leave to the consideration of those whom, I thank *God*, it more immediately concerns than myself; who are to be *faithful* in *GOD’s* *house*; and to *watch* for *mens* *souls* as those who must give account to the *GREAT SHEPHERD*, who will

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shortly.

shortly come ; before whom it will be a *tremendous thing* to have the immortal souls of THOUSANDS required at their hands.

S E C T. VI.

The Terms of MINISTERIAL Conformity hard and terrible.—LAY-DISSENT justified.—The Rise of the Separation.

NEXT after CONFIRMATION, I considered *two* other offices of your *Liturgy*, viz. ABSOLUTION of the Sick, and the BURIAL of the Dead ; and shewed them, I apprehend, to be liable to great exceptions ; and to have no friendly aspect upon the *morals* and *souls* of men. I am strengthened in that opinion by observing, that amidst the variety of *trifling* things to which you have descended, in the prosecution of this debate, you have quite overlooked these *two* important points ; and have not so much as *undertaken* their defence. It does some honour to your understanding not to *attempt* to defend what you know to be *indefensible*, but to let *the forms* lie under the imputations charged upon them ; till GOD shall put it into the *hearts* of those who have it in their *power* to wipe these unhappy *blemishes* from the face of the Church.

But as to *these*, and some other of your *additional splendors* (doing reverence towards *the East*, and bowing to the *name* of JESUS, which also you do not so much as pretend either to *justify* or *explain*) you observe,——“ That these are things
“ with which, as a *Layman*, I have no concern.
“ As to the form of *Absolution*, what has he, for
“ GOD’S

“ God’s sake, to do with it? If he does not design to take *orders* in the Church, and so subscribe to the use of the *Liturgy*, ’tis no concern of *his* whether that form be defensible or not *.”

But have not I, dear Sir, as much to do with YOUR *Ministerial-Conformity*, as you with MY *Lay-Dissent*? Are YOU not as much obliged to vindicate, before the world, your SUBSCRIPTION and USE of these offices in your Church; as I am to justify my SEPARATION from it? Yes, and I now publicly call upon you, and charge it upon your most serious deliberate reflections, as you will soon answer it at a *supreme and impartial* Tribunal, to remember and consider—

That you have *solemnly*, and in GOD’s presence (GOD that *searcheth the heart*, and that abhors all *prevarication, hypocrisy, and deceit*, especially in religious things) in the presence of this GOD, I say, and in the face of *his Church*, you have declared your UNFEIGNED assent and consent to ALL and EVERY THING contained in, and prescribed by the book of *Common-prayer, &c.* If then there be any ONE thing contained in that book, any ONE office or form, irrational, unfit, repugnant to the Gospel-scheme, and which no well instructed Christian can *heartily assent to*, or *unfeignedly approve*. I appeal to your own conscience, I appeal to the whole world——Where is the *honour*? Where the *Christian simplicity* and *Godly sincerity* of this solemn declaration! What,——shall a man, a Minister, in GOD’s presence, and appealing to HIM as the *searcher of hearts*, declare his UNFEIGNED ASSENT to things he does not ap-

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prove;

prove; and promise his **UNFEIGNED CONSENT** to use forms in **GOD'S worship**, which he *heartily dislikes* ! This is a most grievous yoke ; beheld by *unbelievers*, upon the necks of *Christian Ministers*, with mighty insults and scoffs ; and which every friend to the *Christian* name should wish heartily to see removed. And,

This, as before observed, *justifies* most fully that **SEPARATION** from your Church, to which our *fathers* were compelled, and which *we* at present continue : when in a most unrighteous and schismatical manner *she* cast out above *two thousand* of her Ministers, for not subscribing and declaring *this UNFEIGNED assent and consent*. These *Ministers* were by this *deprived* of what they had not *forfeited* ; deprived of acting as *Ministers* by those who had no right, nor authority, to deprive them of it. The *pastoral relation* therefore undoubtedly remained betwixt them and their respective flocks ; and they acted a lawful, a worthy part in *continuing* their *ministerial* services, though thus cruelly cast out.

“ No, you reply, they ought to have conformed as *Laymen*, as some of them did ; much less
 “ will this justify the *Laity* of those times ; less
 “ still the Ministers and *Laity* of the *present* in
 “ their separation *.” To their immortal praise be it recorded, they better understood their *rights* and their *duty* as **CHRIST'S subjects**, the **ONLY KING** in the Church ; and, with great *suffering* and worldly *loss*, entered boldly their protest against this presumptuous invasion of *his Throne* ; this schismatical intrusion of **NEW TERMS** of the
 Christ-

Christian *Ministry* and *Communion* into his Church. The *conditions* of exercising the Christian Ministry, which the *Act of Uniformity* imposed upon our fathers, were such as no power upon earth had a right to impose upon them: They were such, as if complied with, opened a wide way for innumerable corruptions, superstitions and persecutions to enter and lay waste the Church. Their subscription was required to *NEW articles* of faith which CHRIST had never made; and their unfeigned assent and consent to *NEW rites* and *forms* of worship which neither CHRIST nor his *Apostles* had ever appointed or enjoined: Yea, it obliged them schismatically to *confine* Christian Communion to those only who would submit to these *inventions* of men in the *worship of God*; and to deny *Baptism* and the *Lord's-supper*, to those who, by the constitution and laws of *Christ's* kingdom, were duly qualified to receive, and had an absolute right to them.

Amongst others, there are *two* ever-memorable *circumstances* from which the flagrant oppression and tyranny of those proceedings most strongly appear, 1. That the *Time fixed* for the Ministers subscribing and assenting to the alterations in the *Common-prayer* was so short, that not *one* in an hundred of those who lived remote from *London* saw, or could be supposed to see them, before their assent and consent was, under so severe a penalty, to be *solemnly given*. It is a known and certain truth, says one *, that the *Liturgy*, with its alterations, to which they were *unfeignedly* to assent, came not out of the press till *Bartholomew-Eve*;

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* Tong of Schism, page 150.

the day ensuing, which was the *ultimate Time* fixed by the *Act* for the Ministers subscription ; so all those, throughout the kingdom, who *conformed*, except a few in *London*, subscribed to they *knew not what*. “ The matter was driven on, says “ *Bishop Burnet*, with so much *precipitation*, that “ it seemed expected the Clergy should subscribe “ *implicitly* to a book they had *never seen*. This “ was done by too many, as the Bishops themselves informed me——*.” Could any thing be more unrighteous or tyrannical than this?— Yes : For,

2. The unhappy *Ministers* were obliged likewise to declare solemnly, and even to subscribe a *notorious*, most *dangerous* and *important* UNTRUTH, *viz.* *That it is not lawful upon ANY PRETENCE WHATSOEVER to take arms against the King, or any commissioned by him.*—A *position* absolutely subversive of the *British* constitution, and which the nation was soon after (in *God's* righteous and wise Providence) brought openly to acknowledge to be traiterous, detestable, scandalous and false. A *position* which, if admitted, the *glorious* REVOLUTION, and our present *happy* GOVERNMENT, had never taken place ; but *Tyranny* and *Popery*, with all their dire curses, had been bound eternally upon our necks. But, be astonished, O Heavens ! This *false*, this *base*, this *scandalous* declaration, by the *Act* of Uniformity, the *Ministers*, upon pain of losing their places, were obliged solemnly to make. Our *fathers* nobly abhorred it ; scorned to betray the rights and liberties of their country, and to be *tools* of arbitrary power. For this heroic *refusal* they were cast cruelly from their Churches, and delivered up, with their

* Hist. of his Time, Vol. I. page 212, Oct.

their starving families, to extreme sufferings and distress*.

This, Sir, was the shameful, the tyrannical yoke, which the *Act of Uniformity* would have put upon the necks of our illustrious predecessors; and to which, as CHRISTIANS and as PROTESTANTS they bravely scorned to submit. Noble was the STAND which they made in defence of *Christian Liberty and truth*. Glorious will their names ever shine in the *British* annals, whilst *virtue and integrity* are sacred amongst us. Peace and everlasting honour be upon the memory of these Christian heroes: Future generations will rise and call them blessed!

To their MINISTERS thus unrighteously and cruelly ejected, it was the duty and the honour of the *Christian LAITY* to adhere. It was partly for their liberty, and that the Gospel might be continued in its primitive simplicity and purity amongst them, that their Ministers thus suffered: It had been inglorious then, ungrateful, and in the highest degree unjust, to have forsaken their ejected

* “ By the *Act of Uniformity*, says Mr. Locke, all the Clergy of England are obliged to subscribe and declare, *That it is not lawful upon any pretence whatever to take arms against the King*. This they readily complied with †. For you must know that sort of men are taught rather to obey, than understand. And yet that *Bartolomew-Day* was fatal to our Church and Religion, by throwing out a very great number of worthy, learned, pious, orthodox Divines who could not come up to this Oath, and other things in that *Act*. And so great was the zeal in carrying on this Church-affair and so blind the obedience requir’d, that if you compute the time of passing this *Act*, with that allowed for the Clergy to subscribe the book of *Common-Prayer* thereby established, you will find it could not be printed and distributed, so as that one man in FORTY could have seen and read the book they did so perfectly assent and consent to.” *Maiz. Col.* page 61.

† Our two thousand worthy predecessors excepted,

ejected Pastors; and not have borne their witness with them against the imposing *spirit* which then lifted itself up, and was fastening a disgraceful yoke upon the Disciples of *Christ*. Through the favour of Heaven, a noble spirit of *Christian fortitude* was awakened also in LAY-Breasts (and, its mercy be praised, still lives; beats high; and, we hope, daily advances to the final and everlasting overthrow of bigotry, church-tyranny and persecution from the earth.) They saw and detested the dangerous and fatal *Schism* and *Usurpation* upon the rights of conscience, which a part of lordly men were setting up in the Church of *Christ*. They stuck fast to their injured Ministers, and to the principles of Christian liberty. And GOD hath eminently blessed their Churches for the promoting sincere piety, sobriety, and virtue in all succeeding times.

This was the rise of that SEPARATION from the Establishment which I am defending in these Letters. A SEPARATION, which as it was founded upon *Christian* and just principles, so it has marvellously subsisted, under great worldly discouragements, strengthened and upheld, we trust, by the mighty power of GOD. And by the same mighty power, we hope, will still be upheld, till his mercy shall dispose the hearts of our brethren who have cast us out, to receive us again.

As a Layman, Sir, I consider the GOSPEL and CHRISTIAN LIBERTY as a sacred deposit committed to me by GOD, for which I am to be accountable at his Tribunal hereafter. As to these, he hath expressly charged me, and every Lay-Christian, to watch,——to stand fast,——to keep what is committed to me,——to fight the good fight of

of faith, &c.——If I see then the *simplicity* and *liberty* of the GOSPEL corrupted and infringed by the inventions, traditions and commandments of men; the UNITY of the Church broken by *new terms* of communion, and *new articles* of faith imposed upon the Disciples. If I see things ridiculous *, superstitious †, erroneous ‡, brought into the Church, and made a part of *Christian* worship; things dangerous to mens souls, and which give them wrong notions of the terms of salvation and acceptance with GOD, and which manifestly tend to cherish a false and *delusive* peace ||. In this case, though a *Layman*, I am bound to enter my protest, and to declare openly my *dissent*, as I would not be condemned as a *betray*er of my SACRED TRUST, and would *stand before my* JUDGE with confidence at last.

S E C T. VII.

Several gross MISREPRESENTATIONS of the Dissenters corrected.

I Proceed next to what you seem to glory in as the peculiar *excellence* of your Letters, but which will soon appear, to your *very* SELF, their peculiar *foible* and *disgrace*, viz. *Your retorting upon* DISSENTERS *their own pleas and objections;*
par-

* Reading the spurious, romantic, apocryphal tables.

† Bowing at the name of *Jesus*; and worshipping towards the East, &c.

‡ Several of the articles, especially the XXth, and the damnable clauses of the *Atbanasian* Creed.

|| The absolution of the Sick, the Burial Office and Confirmation.

particularly your charge, *That they not only have, but IMPOSE ceremonies in divine worship; and that there are various IMPOSITIONS amongst ourselves.*

You here force me to call you forth, Sir, to undergo the mortification of seeing yourself proved, before the world, a *false accuser* of your brethren. *SITTING at the Lord's-supper* you have at several distinct times, and with great variety of language, most confidently asserted, "to be really IMPOSED by us—to be CONSTANTLY, INVARIABLY and UNIVERSALLY practised amongst us.—That it is NEVER allowed to be DEPARTED from.—That our Ministers INSIST upon and REFUSE to abate it —*," with much more to the same purpose. This now is a charge, not only absolutely *false*, but (which is a very *aggravating* circumstance, and must shock greatly your *character* and *credit* before the world) you had *seen it to be FALSE*. For, you had actually read in *Dr. Calamy's Brief Account, &c.* a most express declaration that NO SUCH THING was at all *imposed* amongst us, but *that our Communicants were AT LIBERTY to use their OWN POSTURE*. I again put you in mind of this, because you have not yet had the honour to own the *falsehood* of this charge, and publicly to retract it. I can assure the public, there are no less than *seven or eight* dissenting Churches in my own neighbourhood, in which the posture either of *standing* or *kneeling* at the Lord's-supper has constantly been practised for many years past (though in some of them the persons are now deceased) and this without the least offence to any of the

* Lett. II. pages 56, 57, 58. Lett. III. pages 8, 9.

the congregation or dislike of the Ministers.— Judge, reader, hence what regard is to be paid to the representations of this zealous Cenfor ! and how justly he describes himself *encountering with ghosts, and groping in the dark.*

With equal rashness you affirmed, and still stoutly maintain,——“ That *kneeling* in family prayer is ALWAYS *practised* by Dissenters ; “ that ’tis IMPOSED and COMMANDED by the “ master of the family upon his children and servants, by his signifying his mind to them, and “ letting them know, once for all, he would have “ them *kneel* *.” Upon a particular enquiry I assure the public, that I cannot find the least trace of any such *imposition*, or *signification* of the master’s mind in any family of Dissenters ; but that, in their family devotions, *standing* is a posture very frequently used, and not avoided in point of conscience, I believe, by ten Dissenters in the kingdom. The matter is too trifling to merit many words. But, to let you see how utterly *unfit* you are for the office you assume, I will take you from the *darkness* where you miserably *grobe*, and lead you to a *light* which will a little disconcert your countenance, by acquainting you, that at the *three* principal dissenting *Academies* in the southern parts of *England*, viz. *Northampton*, *Taunton*, and *Bridgwater*, it hath been the general, if not the constant, unvaried usage both of *Tutors* and *Students*, to STAND at family-prayer. These are the *nurseries* where most of the dissenting Gentlemen and Ministers in *England* have been formed ; whose *custom* therefore must naturally have a wide and strong influence upon multitudes of dissenting families

milies throughout the whole land. See now with what *truth*, with what *honour*, and *discretion* you bolt your random censures at the religious conduct of your neighbours! and feel the just pain with which they rebound and wound your own head!

But what heightens our perverseness and inconsistency, is this; that at the same time that we thus ALWAYS *worship kneeling in our families*, and the master COMMANDS and IMPOSES it upon all its members: “ Yet in our prayers at Church, “ there, it seems, we *always stand*; and it is little “ less than *imposed* upon our people; for so great “ and general is the discountenance that *kneeling* “ lies under, that it requires some courage and “ resolution for any one to venture upon it; and “ if ANY ONE *does*, you say it again, he WILL “ be CENSURED for it *.” A charge not more bold, than it is *groundless* and *false*. “ One con- “ gregation, you have said, you can name, where “ great offence was given by a person kneeling at “ her prayers.” But you have publickly been told, by an authority of great weight, which I presume you durst not contradict, *that the whole account is a MISREPRESENTATION; of which the most authentic evidence is ready to be produced*†. Did I not justly say, that your informers had *served you ill*? A man *conscious* of his own *darkness*, should be cautious into what hands he delivers himself up.

Besides, could you have made good the charge, not against *one* only, but even an *hundred* of our Churches; will this justify the *universality* and *positive-*

* II Def. page 72.
page 14.

† Chandler's Case of Subscription,

positiveness of your assertion, *that if ANY ONE kneels amongst us, he WILL BE CENSURED for it?* This publickly accuses not *one* only, nor an *hundred*, but *ALL* the dissenting Churches of this ridiculous *weakness*; which yet you cannot prove upon any single *one* of them all. The *reproach* therefore comes back with great force upon yourself.—I have made no extensive enquiries on this head, but can take upon me to assure you, there are no less than *six* or *seven* of our congregations near me (I believe there are many more) where *KNEELING at public prayer* hath been constantly practised by one or more members without the least discountenance. And of the many Ministers I have consulted, I find not one who imagines the practice would give offence to any single congregation amongst us.

Alike just and well supported is that other reproach, "*That it is generally held amongst us that the Sacrament is for none but PERFECT and CONSUMMATE Christians.*" After multiplying on this subject many words to little purpose, unless it be to shew the reluctance with which you do it, you are at last forced to *retract* this injurious imputation as to the *Presbyterians* * (who are by far the greater part of the Dissenters) and acknowledge it to be *false*. You might have done the same by the *Independents*, whom you still leave under its weight. For though they are generally more *minute*, I fear, in enquiring after proofs of the *sincerity* of a man's Christianity than the Scriptures authorise them; yet there is scarce one to be found, I believe, amongst the most rigid of them all, who will not declare, that *every SINCERE Christian bath*

hath a right to the Lord's table. For do they not all acknowledge that every such person is become, by the gospel covenant, a *child of GOD*, and a *brother of JESUS CHRIST*? Will the most rigid *Independent* say, then, that *such* have not a right to eat of the *sacramental* supper? No, the *truth of grace*, they will tell you, be it in ever so *weak* a state, intitles to the Sacrament. You wrong them therefore much by saying, that they hold it to belong to NONE but PERFECT and CONSUMMATE *Christians*.

Thus groundless and ill supported, Sir, are the *defamations* of your dissenting brethren, which your *ear* hath been wide extended greedily to receive, and your *hand* so officious to publish to the world. But suffer, I beseech you, the council of a friend. Put away far from you that little, ungenerous, unmanly, bigotted spirit by which “*You advise the Faithful to shun the conversation and company of our Ministers,—as being NOTORIOUS SINNERS, and not to have any intimate unnecessary acquaintance with them, or familiarity in common life*”.* Indulge the more Christian and Catholic disposition Dr. *Nichols* recommends, who informs the world with pleasure “*of the charitable correspondence, and strict degree of friendship which subsists betwixt the established Clergy and some of the dissenting Ministers*”.* ’Tis because they *know* one another no more, that they do not *love* each other better. *Shyness* begets estrangement, *estrangement* aversion, and *aversion* prepares the mind not only to receive with pleasure, but industriously to propagate gross misrepresentations,

* Lett. II. page 8. Let. I. page 83.
page 145.

† Nich. Def.

sentations, false accusations, scandalous and little things, utterly without foundation, and contrary to truth.

Had you freely conversed with the *dissenting Ministers* around you, as the learned *Doctor* advises, you had saved yourself a good deal of public mortification, which your injurious accounts both of their principles and practice have now unhappily drawn upon you. Cultivate at length, Sir, a familiar acquaintance with them. Their acquaintance will do you honour; will edify and enlarge your mind; will give you juster notions of men and of things than a mere college education is capable of doing, and prepare you for that happy world where bigotry and party-zeal no more alienate pious spirits, but where ALL the children of GOD are gathered together in ONE. From them you would have learned——that the ceremonies of the sweeping cloak, of kneeling at ordination, of the people's holding up their hands at that solemnity, of striking a covenant with their pastors, of giving the name at baptism, ——are most of them never used at all in the greater part of the dissenting Churches; and the other not the least imposed; full liberty is given to use, or to use them not; no stress is laid upon them; much less are they made indispensable terms of Christian communion; as sponsors, the cross, and kneeling are with you. They would, moreover, have told you, what you seem not to know, that 'tis not the mere using ceremonies, against which Dissenters object, so much as the imposing them; the laying a stress upon them; the considering them as decorations and improvements of Christian worship; not only useful, but NECESSARY institutions (as you had the irreverence to your divine Lawgiver to pronounce

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concerning *sponsors*) and the making compliance with *them*, terms of reception into the Family and Church of *Christ*. And finally, they would have told you, that mens *uncovering the head* in prayer, is by no means a mere *ceremony*, but a *circumstance* or *act* of worship, which seems dictated by the light of nature; and is commanded by an Apostle, 1 Cor. xi. 3, 4, 7; and that therefore, your placing *this* in the rank of *ceremonies* practised by Dissenters, was (to return your own compliment) most certainly a very *heedless* and *wrong-headed* thing.

“ The neglect of *private fasting*,” is another charge you advance against us, “ and insist confidently that you were in the right in saying it “ was very little, if at all, practised amongst us *.” Dissenters, Sir, I presume, have read that instruction of their Master, *Mat. vi. 17. Thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but to thy father which is in heaven.* Though they affect not to flourish with their *Vigils* and *Lents* (which with sorrow they see turned into little else than a *religious farce* by too many around them) nor, like the *Pharisee* are ostentatious in telling God and the world how often they fast; yet this duty, I am persuaded, is practised with much seriousness amongst them. Besides the excellent Discourse of *Bennet*, to which you were referred, you call for more tracts. See another on the same subject in the *Morning Exercise* by *Barker*; and from the *Lives* of the two *Henrys*, *Allen*, *Baxter*, *Tross*, &c. particularly, of the late most ingenious and pious *Abernethy*, you may learn what are their religious
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sentiments and practice as to this matter. In many of their Churches there are stated periodical fasts, besides the personal domestic ones, which upon extraordinary occasions are not unusual amongst them.

But was it possible you should so alertly attack us on this head, when you knew it in our power with such advantage to retort! If "you have met with no Sermons or Tracts of Dissenters recommending *private fasts*——" Pray, have you met with any which *discourage* and *forbid* them? But, have you never yet met with your own LXXIIId canon? which says, "*No Minister shall without licence of the Bishop, under his HAND and SEAL, keep any SOLEMN FASTS either publickly or in any PRIVATE HOUSES, other than such as are appointed by law, nor be present at any of them; under pain of SUSPENSION for the first fault, of EXCOMMUNICATION for the second, and of DEPOSITION from the Ministry for the third.*" This, Sir, is the exalted foot, upon which the duty of *private fasting* stands in your Church! Could any thing then be more *wise*, more *pertinent*, or more *just* than the censures you deal us here?

As to the posture of *STANDING at public prayer*, for which also you had the *sagacity* sharply to reprehend us; besides the great variety of *Scripture examples* which I produced in its justification, you have had since, from a learned hand *, indisputable proofs from *Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Clements of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Gyprian, the Apostolical Constitutions, Jerome and Austin*, that it was *the posture* in which the Christian Churches

* Chandler's Case of Subscrip. pages 11, 12.

Churches universally offered up their public and most solemn addresses to GOD through all the *primitive* times. So unlucky is your hand, that the bolts you fling at us, *as debasers of the public worship, &c.* light directly upon the heads of some of the most *sacred* and *venerable* persons which either *Scripture* or *Antiquity* holds out to your view!

“ But the instances of *Abraham, Moses, Samuel, &c.* *STANDING* in prayer serve, you say, to little purpose; unless it were also shewn, that they were instances of such *simple mere standing* as is practised in our congregations*.” Yes; they are full to our purpose; because it appears not from the *sacred story*, but they were instances of exactly such *simple mere standing* as is used amongst us. As to the *other gestures* of devotion which your *imagination* would supply, the *SCRIPTURES* are wholly silent; and your fertile imagination, Sir, you will excuse us from accepting as a proper supplement to the *word of GOD*.

“ The *primitive* Christians, it seems, cannot be imagined to do no more than *barely keep upon their feet*.—No, they prayed with hands spread, and with eyes lift up toward Heaven†—” Hence then we infer; *First*, That they did not read their prayers from a *book*: That there were no *Liturgies* in those days. But the Pastor, as *Justin Martyr* and *Origen* say, offered up prayers and praises to GOD *οση δυναμις η κατα δυναμιν*, according to his power, or as he was able. But, *secondly*, by the account which both *Cyprian* and *Tertullian* give of their *gesture* and manner,

* II Def. page 76.

† II Def. page 77.

manner, the public prayers in *dissenting Churches* vastly more resemble it than those offered in *yours*.
 “*Stamus ad orationem, — Cum modestia & humilitate adorantes, &c.*” * *We STAND at prayer, — adoring with modesty and humility, that we may the more effectually commend our prayers to GOD; not even lifting up our hands high, but moderately and decently, no nor boldly elevating our faces. For the Publican whose countenance as well as prayers was HUMBLE and DEJECTED, went away justified rather than the saucy Pharisee.*

When you have sedately considered the contents of this *section*, you will see cause, Sir, once more to resume your *censorial* rod, and to lay it smartly on *yourself*; condemning heartily your own *temerity*, in presuming to write so freely about *persons* and *things* you knew so little of; and to pronounce peremptorily upon matters you had so slightly examined.

Though this article of your MISREPRESENTATIONS might be vastly enlarged, I conclude with a fresh flagrant instance of it †, which shews your *honour* and *justice* in a very unfavourable light, and too plainly demonstrates that your zeal for the Church hath just *eaten them up*. It is the case “of a dissenting Minister in *Cambridge*, whom *you knew*; and who, you affirm, declared from his pulpit, *that the Common prayer-book had damned more souls, than the Bible had saved*; for which he was indicted, and had his public trial as a depraver of it——.” Here you stop short, and *leave* that injured gentleman; yea, you *transmit* him to posterity, under the scandal of

* Tert. de Orat. Cap. 13.

† II Def. page 116.

of the indictment, without having the *honesty* and the *virtue* to inform the world of the issue which you could not but also *know*, viz. *that after a long and full hearing, on both sides, he was by the jury HONOURABLY ACQUITTED.* This, Sir, is such an instance of partiality, injustice and notorious misrepresentation, as all virtuous and wise men will behold with indignation, and as, I am sure, must give you a good deal of pain in the review. The case of that injured Minister (Mr. *Joseph Hufsey*) has been since published (printed at *Colchester* in your neighbourhood 1737) which I cannot doubt, you have seen. From thence it fully appears, that Mr. *Hufsey* spake HONOURABLY, not *reproachfully* of the COMMON-PRAYER, in the Sermon referred to; and that he deserved highly that *acquittal* and *triumph* over his enemies which the *justice* of his country gave him; but which you *injuriously* endeavour to blast and suppress*.

* He was shewing how utterly repugnant the *Arminian* principles are to several parts of the *Common-prayer*; and after several things said very respectfully of that book, concludes,—“ I wish there
“ was more of that *Spirit of God* breathing in the souls of men
“ now, which breathed in the souls of those who made the *Common-*
“ *prayer*; and indeed considering the inconsistency of mens principles, with their gross hypocrisies in practice, I fear that at the
“ great day, when the books are opened, th’ a book of *Common-*
“ *prayer*, when ’t’s opened, will come in a swift witness against
“ them. And if so, I fear it will be found that that book they now
“ so much *rely* on, may be a means of sending more of them to
“ Hell, than the Gospel converts in *England*.”

S E C T. VIII.

Dissenters not INCONSISTENT in submitting to some Ceremonies, and refusing others.

THIS is another charge advanced vigorously against us.—“ The ceremonies of marriage and of burial to which we conform, are injoined in the same manner, by the same authority, and in the same place (the Common-prayer) as the other ceremonies and rites against which we protest.” And you put it as a stunning difficulty,——“ WHERE and WHEN the Magistrate prescribed the marriage ceremonies otherwise than he did those of Baptism and the Lord’s-supper *.” I am truly surprized, Sir, that so mere a cobweb entangles you. Pray, what is your *Common-prayer* ! Is it any thing in the world but a mere *Statute* or *Act of Parliament* ; as really and truly such, and nothing but such, as any *Statute* in our books of law. Now as the *Magistrate* has in this *Statute* injoined some things of a *Civil* nature, which belong therefore to his kingdom, and which he has a right to injoin ; to these we reverently submit : But as he has also, in the same *Statute*, injoined other things of a *religious* nature (pertaining to *Baptism* and the *Lord’s-supper*) which, we humbly apprehend, belong to another kingdom, even that of JESUS CHRIST ; to whom, and to whom ALONE, GOD the Supreme Governor has appropriated *such things* ; as to these, we crave leave to withhold our submission,

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sion, and chuse to obey GOD rather than MAN. And behold, the *very Magistrate* who made the *Statute*, has indulged us herein ! has *excused* our obedience in the points as to which we scruple ! has *repealed* the obligation of this law upon Dissenters ; and allows them to act in these things as to their judgment seems best ! Is there any thing in the least difficult or entangling in all this ?

“ But upon this supposition all our objections
 “ to the burial office as reasons against conformity
 “ fall to the ground. For if the whole transaction
 “ be a *political* thing ; and the gentleman officiating is, in *that*, no other than an *officer of the State*, how is the Church, for the Lord’s sake,
 “ concerned in any thing he either says or does,
 “ on that occasion * ? ” Certainly very much. The Church is indeed nothing but a branch or limb of the STATE. But if the STATE exacts of *those*, whom it deputes to officiate in this part of its administration, *unreasonable* and *shocking* things ; if it commands them to say that *black* is *white* ; to pronounce solemnly a man *saved*, whom they think verily to be *lost* ; and to *thank God* that in his *great mercy* he hath taken to himself an abominable sinner, when in their consciences they believe that *God took him away in wrath*, and hath driven him from his presence to eternal darkness below,—is the *officer*, will you say, who is to pronounce and to do this, *not at all concerned therein* ? Not *that branch* of the administration in which he officiates at all *wounded* in its honour or reputation thereby ? Most deeply, no doubt. And all virtuous and good men, by the eternal regards they owe to RIGHTEOUSNESS and TRUTH, ought openly

openly to protest against such public violations of them; and to declare their dislike of such prostitution of *sacred* things.

The Church, your learned *Warburton** tells you, *has*, by contract or alliance, *resigned up her SUPREMACY in matters ecclesiastical, and her INDEPENDENCY to the State.* The STATE, in consequence of this, hath drawn up for her, *articles of faith and forms of public worship*, which it requires the Church to *subscribe* and to *use*.——Hard fate of unhappy Church! To come as Pupil to the STATE, to ask *what* she must believe, and *how* she must worship; yea, to be forced solemnly to *subscribe ARTICLES*, which she by no means *believes*, and to *use FORMS* of public worship, which she greatly *dislikes*! But, is there no prevarication, nor hypocrisy in all this? No; the STATE hath *commanded* it; and we are to be *subject to the higher powers*, and to *obey those who have the rule over us*: 'Tis not for a man's *private* conscience to kick against the PUBLIC; but if any one dare say,——“ *That either of the ARTICLES is in ANY PART erroneous; or that the book of COMMON-PRAYER contains ANY THING in it contrary to Scripture*; your IVth and Vth *canons* thunder out upon him *ipso facto*, a most terrible *excommunication*, and cut him off, as a *wicked wretch*, from the body of CHRIST.——Excellent constitution this! quite holy and apostolic! most heavenly and divine! bearing upon every part a lively and glorious impress of the character of JESUS CHRIST!——What wonder, if the dignity of the *priestly* character sinks? If *religion* is ridiculed, and its *sacred things* treated

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with

* Alliance, &c: page 87.

with drollery and jest? *It is impossible*, we are told, *but offences will come; but wo be to that man!* wo be to those Christians, whose hypocritical and corrupt conduct lays these *stones of stumbling* in the way of Infidels and Papists! and *by whom the offence cometh!*

SECT. IX.

The egregious absurdity of rejecting PRESBYTERIAN and admitting POPISH Ordinations.

WE come next to the much contested point of *orders or ordination*, as to which you are wont to make a mighty solemn parade. The severity with which you nullify the *Dissenters* ordination, though the *very* SAME with that of all the *illustrious Churches of* PROTESTANTS abroad, when at the same time you are so complaisant as to acknowledge the validity of the ordinations of the *Church of Rome*, is a conduct so extraordinary as one cannot easily comprehend. The hands and the devoutest prayers of a company of truly virtuous, religious and Christian PRESBYTERS, in *Scotland or Geneva*, are not so efficacious, it seems, to send a man forth a *TRUE Minister* in the Church of CHRIST, as the hands and superstitious prayers of an antichristian, idolatrous, persecuting and wicked BISHOP of *Italy or Spain*.—No; let a Priest, ordained by one of *these*, come over to the Church of *England*; he shall be received as a *valid Minister, rightfully* ordained: But, let another, ordained by the most learned, religious PRESBYTERY which *Germany, Hungary or the whole world* can boast, come over also to *this Church, this protestant Church*; his *orders* shall

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shall be pronounced NOT VALID, he must submit to be ordained *afresh*. The FORMER is admitted, as one *rightly* and *duly* entered a *Pastor* in the Christian Church, because a *Bishop's* hand was laid upon him, though with a great many ridiculous, superstitious and foolish rites; and though he was really no CHRISTIAN *Bishop*, but an apostate from *Christianity*, an open and avowed idolater and persecutor of the *flock* of CHRIST; yea, tho' the *Church* also into which, by that ceremony, he was entered was *so far from being a TRUE CHURCH*, that for 900 years past, *nothing can be more* *.——But the LATTER, though set apart to the Ministry by the most fervent and holy prayers; though he has long laboured in the *Church of GOD* with great diligence and success; has suffered, perhaps, the loss of all for the sake of CHRIST and *his truth*; and is fled hither from the rage of *idoltrous and cruel Bishops*; yet (strange to relate!) for not having had the hand of such an idoltrous and cruel *Bishop* in the ceremony of his ordination, he is considered but as a mere LAYMAN in this Protestant Church of *England*; he shall not, cannot, be acknowledged by us as a *Minister* of JESUS CHRIST. How mysterious and quite astonishing is the *partiality* of this!

But let us hear your censure on this head,——
 “ Our Ministers are not duly ordained to their
 “ office: their ministrations are most certainly
 “ irregular; an unnecessary and wanton, if not a
 “ factious departure from the primitive order,
 “ and therefore those who attend them cannot de-
 “ pend that such ordinances will be blessed to
 I 3 them,

* The words of the *homily* which every Clergyman subscribes his solemn approbation of.

" them, nor can they be *pleasing to God* *." And concerning the established *Presbyterian Church of Scotland*, you affirm,— "*That having renounced* " **EPISCOPACY**, *and their ordinations being irregular, their COMMUNION can be neither* " **SAFE nor LAWFUL** †." A most schismatical and rash judgment; which *equally* condemns ALL the illustrious **REFORMED Churches of France, Holland, Switzerland, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Denmark, &c.** They ALL likewise have renounced *Episcopacy*; their *ordinations* therefore must be irregular, and their *communion* neither *safe nor lawful*.

But to give you, Sir, more just and favourable impressions of ordination by *Presbyters*; and to sink a little your esteem of that *episcopal ordination* on which you pique yourself so much, I recommend to your consideration the following things :

1. That *Timothy* was ordained by the *laying on of the hands of the PRESBYTERY*, 1 Tim. iv. 14. — That *Paul* and *Barnabas* were ordained by certain *Prophets and Teachers* in the Church of *Antioch*, and not by any **BISHOP** (of whom there is not a word in all that solemnity) *presiding* in that city, *Acts* xiii. 1, 2, 3. — And that it is a well known, acknowledged, incontestible fact that *Presbyters*, in the celebrated Church of *Alexandria*, ordained even their own *Bishops* for more than 200 years in the earliest ages of Christianity.

2. *Bishops* and *Presbyters* are in Scripture the *very same*; and are not a distinct order or office in the Christian Church. The Church at *Philippi*

* Lett. I. pages 73, 74.

† II Def. page 145.

had but *two* orders of Church officers amongst them, viz. *Bishops* and *Deacons*, *Philip* i. 1. And that the name, office, work of a *Bishop* and *Presbyter* are the same, appears from *Tit.* i. 5, 7. For *this cause* left I thee in *Crete*, that thou shouldst ordain *Presbyters* in every city, FOR a *Bishop* must be blameless.—Paul called the *Presbyters* of the Church of *Ephesus* together, and charged them, *Acts* xx. 27, 28. To take heed to the flock over which the HOLY GHOST had made them *BISHOPS* *Επισκοποις*. So *1 Pet.* v. 1, 2. The *PRESBYTERS* among you I exhort, who also am a *PRESBYTER*, feed the flock of GOD among you, performing the office of *BISHOPS* *Επισκοποις*.

The superiority of *Bishops* to *Presbyters* is not only by the first Reformers and Founders of the Church of *England*, but by many of its most learned and eminent Doctors since; not pretended to be of *divine*, but only of *human* institution; not grounded upon *Scripture*, but only upon the custom or ordinances of this realm. “The truth is, that in the *New Testament* there is no mention of any degree or distinction of orders, but only of *DEACONS* or *Ministers*, and of *PRIESTS* or *Bishops*—,” says a declaration of the function, &c. which was signed by more than thirty-seven *Civilians* and *Divines*, amongst whom were *thirteen BISHOPS* *. The book intitled the *Institution of a Christian Man* subscribed by the Clergy in Convocation and confirmed by Parliament, owns *BISHOPS* and *PRESBYTERS* by *Scripture* to be the same †. And says, tho’ *St. Paul* consecrated and ordered *Bishops* by imposition of hands; yet

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* Burnet’s Hist. of the Reformat. Vol. I. Ap. page 321.

† To the same purpose speaks *The Erudition of a Christian Man*.

there is no certain rule prescribed in Scripture for the nomination, election, or presentation of them: this is left to the positive laws of every country. And that the main ground of settling *episcopal* government in this nation was not any pretence of *divine* right, but the *convenience* of that form of Church-government to the state and condition of the Church at the time of the *Reformation*, your learned *Stillingfleet* * affirms, and proves it to be the sentiment of Archbishop *Cranmer* and other chief Reformers both in *Edward VI.* and Queen *Elizabeth's* reign, of Archbishop *Whitegift*, Bishop *Bridges*, *Loe*, *Hooker*, *Sutcliffe*, *Hales*, *Chillingworth*, &c.†——Yea,

3. It deserves your serious consideration whether, by the constitution and frame of the Church of England, SACERDOTAL ordination be really at all necessary to the making a valid Minister, and to the giving success and efficacy to his ministrations; or, whether there is, really, any such ordination in the Church of England at all? It seems clearly the sentiment of our first Reformers that

* Irenic. Ch. VIII. page 385.

† See a Letter of Dr. *Raynolds* of Oxford on this head; where he declares the sameness of Bishops and Priests, or that they have equal authority and power by God's word, to have been the judgment of St. Paul, Chrysostom, Jerome, Ambrose, Austin, Theoderus, Primasius, Theophylact, Oecumenius, Aenselm, Gregory, Gratian, the Waldenses, Wickliffites, Hussites, &c. Neal. Hist. Purit. Vol. I. page 497.

Archbishop *Bancroft* and the rest of the Bishops with him owned the ordination of Presbyters to be valid, and therefore refused to re-ordain the Scottish Presbyters who were then to be made Bishops, declaring, That to do so it, was to doubt whether there were any lawful vocation in most of the reformed Churches. Archbishop *Spotswood's* Hist. page 514. The Bishops of Scotland, when Episcopacy was settled there, never required the Presbyterian Ministers to take episcopal ordination. Bishop *Burnet's Vindicat.* pages 84, 85.

that it was not; and that they established the Church of *England* agreeable to this plan. For in a select assembly of Divines, convened by the authority of King *Edward VI.* for the settling important points relating to religion, it was determined, as may be presumed from a recorded opinion of Archbishop *Cranmer* their President,—*

“ That though, in the admission of Bishops, Parsons, Vicars, and other *Priests* to their office, there be divers comely *ceremonies* and *solemnities* used (he speaks chiefly of *ordination*) yet *these* be not of *necessity*, but only for good order and seemly fashion. For if such offices and ministrations were committed WITHOUT such solemnity, they were nevertheless *truly* committed. And there is no more promise of GOD that grace is given in the committing of the *ecclesiastical* office, than it is in the committing the *civil*.—A *Bishop* may make a *Priest* by the Scriptures, and so may *Princes* and *Governors* also, and that by the *authority* of GOD committed to them; and the *people* also by their *election*. For as we read that Bishops have done it, so Christian Emperors and Princes usually have done it: And the people, before Christian Princes were, commonly did *elect* their Bishops and Priests.—In the New Testament, he that is appointed to be a Bishop or a Priest, needeth no *consecration* by the Scripture; for election or appointing thereto is *sufficient* †.”

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Agree-

* Vide Extract from Archbishop *Cranmer's* M. S. Stilling. Iren. Chap. VIII. page 391.

† To the same purpose speaks the *Erudition of a Christian Man*—which was drawn up by a committee of *Bishops* and *Divines*, and read

Agreeable hereto, the *Bishops* in this Church, in the reigns of *Hen. VIII.* and *Edw. VI.* took out commissions from the CROWN, like other STATE-OFFICERS, for the exercising their *spiritual* jurisdiction; in which they acknowledge, —“ That ALL SORTS of *jurisdiction*, as well “ ecclesiastical as civil, flow ORIGINALLY from “ the *regal* power, as from a SUPREME HEAD, “ the fountain and spring of ALL Magistracy “ within this kingdom; and that they ought with “ *grateful* minds to acknowledge this favour derived from the KING’s liberality and indulgence; and accordingly they ought to render it “ up whenever the KING thought fit to require it “ of them. And amongst the particulars of *ecclesiastical* power given them by this commission, “ is that of ORDAINING *Presbyters*; and all “ this to last no longer than the King’s pleasure. “ And these things are said to be *super* and *ultra* “ over and above what belongs to them by Scripture *.” †

From these *commissions*, which the Bishops took out, especially *Bonner’s* Bishop of London, it is evident, that all the *power of ORDAINATION* which the

read and approved by the *Lords* spiritual and temporal, and the lower House of Parliament. An. 1543. Vid. *Neal’s Hist. Purit.* Vol. I. pages 33, 36.

* Rights Chr. Ch. Pref. page 39.

† Even Archdeacon *Ecchard* acknowledges, that in the reign of *Hen. VIII.* the *Bishops* took out, and acted, by *commissions* in which they were but *subaltern* to the King’s *Viceregent*: But in the reign of *Edward VI.* none being in that office, they were immediately under the KING: But by these commissions they declare, “ that they held “ their *Bishoprics* only during the King’s pleasure, and were im- “ powered in the King’s name, as his Delegates, to perform ALL “ THE PARTS OF THE EPISCOPAL FUNCTION.” *Ecchard’s* Hist. Eng. page 299.

the Bishops had, or could have and exercise, in this kingdom, they derived *entirely* from the CIVIL MAGISTRATE, and *only* from him *. And that this really is the case as to the *ecclesiastical orders* conferred by our *present* Bishops; that all the validity, significancy or weight which they have in *this* Church they derive *purely* and *solely* from the authority of the MAGISTRATE incontestibly appears hence; namely, that the Magistrate has *authoritatively* directed and prescribed *HOW* and *TO WHOM* *ordination* is to be given †. And should an *ordination* be given by all the Bishops of this Church in *OTHER* manner and *OTHER* form than *that* prescribed by the Magistrate, *such ordination* would be of no legality at all, nor authority in *this* Church. The man *so ordained* would be no proper Minister in the Church of *England*. A Minister in the Church of *Christ*; he possibly might be; but he would, I repeat it, be no Minister in the Church of *England*; nor would have *power* and *authority* to officiate as a Priest *therein* ‡.

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* Anno 1550, an order of Council was made that some Bishops and other learned men should devise an order for the CREATION of *Bishops* and *Priests*. Burnet's Hist. Refor. Vol. III. page 195.

† Vid. the judgment of the court in the case of *Howel*, a Non-juring Clergyman, ordained by Dr. *Hicks* (*Tindal's Hist. of Eng.* Vol. IV. page 502.) His ordination was pronounced *illegal*, and he disowned as a *Clergyman*. Vid. a Statute 8 of *Eliz.* in Fuller's Ch. Hist. Book ix. page 80.

‡ The Bishop at an ordination asks,—“*Are you called according to the Will of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the DUE ORDER OF THIS REALM.*”

Note, It is not sufficient to make him a Minister in *this Church* that he is called according to the will or institution of *JESUS CHRIST*, if he be not also called according to the *due order* of *THIS REALM*.

The Church of *England*, if you duely weigh it, seems evidently constituted upon the *congregational* or *independent* plan. 'Tis from *the PEOPLE* (in other words, from the King and Parliament, in whom the *People* have lodged their power) that all the officers in this Church receive their whole authority and are directed *how to act*. In all their *ORDINATIONS*, *Jurisdictions*, *Ministrations*, its Bishops and Priests act entirely by an authority committed to them by the *Civil Magistrate*, received originally from *the PEOPLE*. So that as *the PEOPLE*, by their representatives, are supposed to have authorised, directed and appointed them to act; so, and so only, are all the *Archbishops*, *Bishops* and *Priests* in this Church to officiate, and to discharge their several functions therein. And if they presume to transgress the bounds which *the PEOPLE*, by their representative, have set them; and to officiate *OTHERWISE* than in the *form* and *manner* prescribed, their ministrations are illegal and of no authority in this Church.

This, Sir, I appeal to all who know our *constitution*, is the real and true nature of your boasted *EPISCOPAL ordination*, as it now stands in our Church. 'Tis an *ordination* performed by a *civil officer*, *i. e.* by one who officiates only by an authority derived to him from the *civil Magistrate*, and the legality of whose ministrations, and their efficacy in this Church, depends entirely upon his observing the *manner* and *forms* which the Magistrate hath enjoined——*Ordinations* then, in the Church of *England*, if traced to their proper origin and rightly considered, are in truth nothing but merely *civil* or *popular* ordinations.

Nor

Nor let it be here replied,—That these *Bishops*, who by the laws of *England* are impowered to ordain, are at the same time to be considered as *successors* of the Apostles, and have received *power of ordination* from these Founders of the Christian Church by an *uninterrupted lineal descent*. For the constitution and law of *England* knows nothing at all of this ; it rests not *this power*, which it commits to its Bishops, upon any such *lineal succession* or *descent* (which it knows to be a rope of sand, a ridiculous *chimera*, a thing which no man upon earth is able to make out) No ; but it considers the KING, vested (by act of Parliament, or the suffrage of the People) with a *FULNESS of ALL power ecclesiastical* in these realms, as *empowering* and *authorising* Bishops to ordain. This power of ordination was once delegated to *Cromwel*, a *LAYMAN*, as Vicegerent to the King. And by the constitution and law of *England* this Layman had then as much authority *to ordain* as any *Bishop* in the realm ; and any *Priest* whom he had ordained would have been as much a *Minister* in the Church of *England*, and his ministrations as valid, as if all the *Bishops* of the realm had laid their hands on his head *. But,

4. The only possible way of avoiding this difficulty, is recurring to the wretched refuge of *POPISH ordinations*, and deriving the validity of your orders and ministrations, and your powers of ordination, from the idolatrous *Church of ROME*. If you derive them not from the *CIVIL Magistrate*, you must from *POPISH Bishops*. A desperate
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* *Heath and Day*, the Bishops of *Worcester* and *Chichester*, were deprived of their Bishoprics by a Court of Delegates, who were all *Laymen*. Vid. *Echard's Hist. Eng.* page 310.

rate refuge this! attended with a train of monstrous absurdities! all which yet, rather than admit the *orders* of foreign *Protestant Divines* and the regularity of their ministrations, you resolutely swallow.

That **POPERY** is an undoubted fundamental *subversion* of the whole scheme of Christianity.— That it is that **APOSTACY** *from the Christian faith*, described by *St. Paul*, *1 Tim.* iv. 1, 2, 3.— The **MAN OF SIN** and the **SON OF PERDITION** *sitting in the Temple (Church) of GOD; opposing, and exalting himself above all that is called GOD*, foretold by the **HOLY GHOST**, *2 Thes.* ii. 3, 4.— And that the *Church of Rome* is represented, by the *Prophetic Spirit* in the Revelation of *St. John*, as an *adulterous and bloody WOMAN*, which hath broken the marriage covenant that espoused her to **CHRIST**, and is fallen into a state of abominable and open *lewdness*; multiplying her *fornications*; and instead of bringing forth and cherishing a *faithful seed* to the Redeemer, breathes out horrid threatnings and persecutions against them, *makes war with the Saints*, destroys them from the earth, and is *drunk with their blood*; that the *Papacy or Church of Rome* is thus described by the **HOLY GHOST**, *Protestant Divines*, and even those of the *Church of England*, readily confess. How astonishing then to see! That from this idolatrous apostate *Church* you derive, by **ORDINATION**, your *spiritual and sacerdotal powers*; and boast that you can trace from her by an *uninterrupted line* your ecclesiastical descent. Strange! that without shame you declare yourselves before the world the offspring of this *filthy withered old HARLOT*, as your Church expressly calls her; and that the validity of your *ordinations* and holy offices

offices in CHRIST's Church, you rest upon their transmission to you from this *antichristian* and *false* Church, even at the very time that you acknowledge that for a THOUSAND years past it has been so far from having the nature of the TRUE CHURCH that NOTHING CAN BE MORE.

—What miracles are here! That which is no true Church, nor has been *any thing* like it for a thousand years past; yet conveys true, regular, Church-offices and powers! An *anti-apostolic* Church imparting genuine *apostolic* orders! The *Synagogue of Satan* become the *sacred repository*, where the power of *ordination* to holy offices in CHRIST's Church, for more than *ten centuries* principally rested, and was almost only to be found! The *Church of Rome*, which by apostacy hath cut itself off from the *body of CHRIST*, hath nevertheless his *spirit* and *authority* dwelling in it; and is *commissioned* by CHRIST to examine, ordain, and send Ministers into his Church, for the edifying of his body and perfecting his Saints! How in every view marvellous and transcendant is this?

“ But Harlot as she is, you say, she may bring forth children as well as a virtuous matron, and “ sometimes children far better than herself *.” Poor consolation this! For the *children* she brings forth in this state of her divorcement must be *born of fornication*, a spurious and corrupt race.

This, Sir, is that Church of *Rome* whom you own as your MOTHER, and from whom you claim by *ordination* to be ecclesiastically sprung; and the *sons* of this vile and detestible *prostitute* you acknowledge as your *brethren*; duly born into the Church;

Church ; ordained, because *episcopally*, in a valid and right manner ; whereas the glorious company of foreign *reformed* Churches, together with the Church of *Scotland* and the *Dissenting Ministers* at home, you utterly disown as *ecclesiastical* brethren ; and affirm, “ *That having renounced EPISCOPACY, and their ordination being irregular, their communion can be neither lawful nor safe.*” Where, alas ! is the decency, the consistency and common sense ; to say nothing of the christianity or charity of this !

The Church of *Rome*, by the XIXth article of the Church of *England*, cannot possibly be a part of the true visible Church of CHRIST ; for this it thus defines, — *A congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of GOD is preached, and the sacraments be duly administred according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.* But, do you not acknowledge that the *pure word of GOD* is so far from being preached in the *Romish* Church, that 'tis there corrupted by most erroneous and abominable traditions, idolatrous rites and *blasphemous fables*, as your XXXIst article most righteously stiles them ? Do you not confess *the wine* to be an essential part of the Lord's-supper ? Is that sacrament then *duly ministred, according to Christ's ordinance* in the Church where *the cup* is taken from the People ?

In short, “ If blasphemies against GOD and “ tyranny over men ; if defacing the ideas of “ *Deity*, and corrupting the principles of moral “ *honesty* and *virtue* ; if subverting the foundations of natural religion, and acting directly “ counter to the spirit and design, and over- “ throwing the essential articles of the Christian faith ;

“ faith ; if the most avowed and bold affronts offered to Heaven, and the bloodiest and most brutal outrages executed on the best of men ; if all these, I say, are sufficient to exclude men from being a part of the truly catholic apostolic Church, the Romanists can certainly have no pretences to it.”

The Church of *Rome* then having by her abominable immoralities, blasphemies and idolatries, *excommunicated* and cut herself off from the body of Christ, she cannot have his *spirit* and *power* dwelling in her ; consequently, has no authority to convey *sacerdotal* characters and offices in *Christ's* Church ; the characters and offices therefore which she pretends to convey, are spurious and of no validity or efficacy therein.

But what finishes the absurdity, and renders it quite *astonishing*, is,——That these very *Popish Clergy*, to whose *ORDERS* you pay such extravagant complaisance, are so unpolite as not to return the compliment to *yours* : No, so far from it, that they rudely pronounce *you ALL*, from the greatest *Archbishop* to the meanest *Clerk* in the land, a company of mere common unconsecrated *Laymen* ; as unqualified for performing any *holy office* in the Christian Church as the most illiterate and contemptible Dissenter of us all. To return good for evil is, indeed, sometimes truly great. But to see the venerable bench of Bishops and Governors of this Church, with the whole body of its Clergy, not only *yielding*, but *contending* before the world for, the validity and efficacy of the orders of *POPISH Priests* ; when at the same time these very *Priests* are going up and down the kingdom undermining their authority, invalidating their Ministrations, and representing *their* sacerdotal powers

as a mere nullity and jest. — To see them publicly maintaining the *ecclesiastic* characters and office of these corrupters of Christianity, these sworn enemies to our civil government and to his Majesty King George, these crafty seducers, who are gone out spreading treason, idolatry, superstition and destructive error through the land, — this is such a strain of courtesy as no reason can justify; yea, is such a strain of weakness and impolicy as ought not to be beheld without indignant concern. For this gives these *Popish emissaries* a most dangerous advantage over you: they artfully tell their proselytes, “ That *you* acknowledge the truth and validity of *their* orders; whilst *they* utterly deny the validity of *yours*; the only SAFE and SURE way therefore is to stick to *their* ministrations; which, yourselves being judges, are *authentic* and *valid*; whereas there is, at least, a *risque*, a *danger* attending *yours*,” and, “ *that the people cannot* (to use your own words) *depend with so much assurance as is requisite to the peace and acquiescence of their mind, that SUCH ORDINATIONS will be blessed to them, and that they are pleasing to GOD.*” Thus they uncourtously turn the weapons against you which you put into their hands; and whilst you are justifying *their* orders, make use of those *very orders* to poison and pervert the people; and craftily to traduce, undermine and destroy your Church.

“ The *great blessing* of EPISCOPAL *ordination* is wanting to the foreign Churches, you affirm, “ rather through NECESSITY than *choice* *.” This is perfectly romantic, and has not the face of probability. Does not the world know, that in
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* II Def. page 50.

their public confessions and formularies of faith, *Bishops* and *Priests* are declared originally *the same*, and that the power of *ordination* belongs equally to both *? Can any thing be more manifest than that *episcopal* ordination, if chosen and desired by them, like other *British manufactures*, might with all imaginable ease be in a few days exported to them, and spread in a few months through all their provinces and towns? Are there not in this kingdom thousands of *Ecclesiastics*, who, receiving it from our *Bishops*, would most joyfully carry over this *great blessing* to foreign Churches? Or should any of their *Divines* come over to fetch it, would they not be received, think you, with extasies of welcome; and return loaded with *honours*; perhaps, with favours more *solid* and *substantial* than these? Has there no management or address been used thro' a century past, to introduce into their Churches this *episcopal* grace? And as to its "*suiting the constitution and frame of their civil governments,*" nothing, you know, can better fit those of the *Lutheran* profession, who have *nominal Bishops*, tho' no *ordination* but PRESBYTERIAN amongst them——. To assert then, "*that the foreign Churches do really PREFER, DESIRE and some of them SIGH for EPISCOPAL ORDINATION; and that it is not of CHOICE but of NECESSITY they want it—,*" appears to me to be mere *romance*; an assertion far

* Mr. Du Plessis (says Bishop *Jer. Taylor*) a man of honour and great learning, attests, that at the first reformation there were many Archbishops and Cardinals in *Germany, France, Italy, &c.* who joined in the reformation, whom they might, but did not, employ in their ordinations; and therefore, says the Bishop, what *necessity* can be pretended in this case I would fain learn? *Episc. asserted, &c.*
page 191.

far from doing honour to the person that makes it.

There is one consideration more, upon this head of *ordination*, which I beg leave to mention; the rather, because there hath not generally, I think, that stress been laid upon it which its importance deserves: Which is,

5. Supposing the *power of ORDINATION* to be, from Scripture, ever so clearly proved to belong *solely* to *Bishops*; yet all the Bishops of this realm refusing to ordain but upon *unjustifiable terms*; *ORDINATION*, in this case, may justly be sought from *Presbyters*; and, when given by *them*, is of undoubted *validity* and *regularity* in the Christian Church.

The *Bishops* require from all candidates for ordination, as an *indispensible* term of receiving it from them—*That they subscribe willingly, and ex animo to the XXXIX articles, that they are ALL and EVERY ONE of them agreeable to the word of GOD: And that they solemnly declare their UNFEIGNED assent and consent to ALL and EVERY THING contained in and prescribed by the Book of COMMON-PRAYER.* This now is a term of admission to the *Christian Ministry*, which they have *no authority* from *CHRIST* to insist upon or to make; yea, a term (if with humility I might say it) which they *offend* greatly against the *rights* and *liberty* of the Christian Church, and against *CHRIST* its only Head, by presuming to make; because, thousands may be *duely* qualified, according to the *will of CHRIST*, to act as Ministers in *his Church*, who cannot with a good conscience comply with *this term*. By insisting therefore on it, they *reject* those whom *CHRIST receives*; and *unlawfully* keep out numbers of worthy

worthy persons from a part in the Christian *Ministry*, who, by the appointment and will of GOD, and by the constitution of the *Christian Church*, have a *right* of admission to it; and whose *Ministry* is greatly needed and would be useful therein.

Let the *sole power* of ordination, then, be allowed to have been *originally* lodged in the *Bishops*; yet, if at any time they should enter into a combination to *abuse* and *pervert* this power; to lay a yoke upon Christian *Ministers* which CHRIST never laid upon them, and which they *ought not* to bear; and *ordination* cannot be had from THEM upon *honourable* and *Christian* terms; in *this* we may safely reason, as our Lord hath taught us in a like case, *that GOD will have mercy and not sacrifice*; that a mere *ceremony* is to give way to considerations of a *moral* nature; and that men, in other respects well qualified, when their service is needed (of which *themselves* and the *people* are to be judges) may act as *Ministers* in the Church of *Christ*; either without any *ordination*, when it cannot *honourably* be had; or with such only, whether *Presbyterian* or *Popular*, as can be obtained upon *honourable* terms.

These things I recommend, Sir, to your dispassionate and sober thoughts; not doubting but they will dispose you to be less severe upon *Presbyterian*, and more modest in your glorying on *episcopal* ordination, than you have formerly been.— And whether those who now claim the *sole power* of ordination, and consider it as a TRUST committed to them by CHRIST, can justify their *refusing it*, but upon compliance with such *severe* and *unreasonable* terms,—deserves maturely to be weighed; considering, that (as far as they bear
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any relation to *Christ*) they are not LORDS, but only *Servants* in his House, and that to HIM they must be *accountable* for so important a TRUST.

S E C T. X.

Of the Peoples Right to CHUSE their own Pastors.

THE next point to be considered, is the right of the Christian *Laity* to chuse their own Ministers. The charge given them in Scripture *to try the Spirits*,—*to beware of false Prophets*,—*to take heed of what they hear*, “you own, incon-
“testibly proves their *right of judgment*, or of ex-
“amining and proving doctrines; but the thing
“you want to see is, how from the *right of judg-*
“*ment*, the *right of choice* can be deduced? *”
But can a person of any discernment want to be shewn this? Does not the right of JUDGING in things of religion, necessarily imply not only a *right*, but a *duty* also, of ACTING agreeable to *that judgment*; or, in other words, a *right of choice*? Pray, why must a man *examine*? What! that he may have, peradventure, the guilt and mortification of *combating* his own conscience, and acting *contrary* to his sense of things? What absurdity were this! If the Christian *Laity* were to *try the Spirits*, and to *examine* and *weigh* the doctrine their pretended Pastors brought; then *those*, surely, whom they found to bring *not the doctrine of CHRIST*, and to be led by *not the Divine Spirit*, they were to reject, to turn away from, and not to accept as their *spiritual Guides*.

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Accordingly, the *Christian* LAITY are charged *Rom. xvi. 17.* To mark (σκοπε.ν to consider, to observe carefully) *them that CAUSE divisions and offences contrary to the Christian doctrine, and to AVOID them.* Note, those who make *NEW terms* of communion in the Church of *Christ*; who set up *NEW ceremonies* of human invention, and command the subjects of *Christ* to yield obedience to them; and who *cast out* of the Church, or *refuse* to admit into it, those who comply not with *such* ceremonies and rites; *THESE*, Sir, are the men (I appeal to your own conscience, and to the bar of *eternal REASON* at which all must shortly stand) *THESE* are the men which *CAUSE divisions and offences contrary to the Christian doctrine*; *THESE*, therefore, the Christian people are expressly *commanded*, by the Apostle, to *AVOID*. Attentively consider this, and you will never more condemn our *separation* from your Church; this single text alone justifies it before the world; and not only so, but proves it a most plain and indispensable duty.

The Church of *England* seems to have *departed from*, and most manifestly to have *destroyed* the primitive Apostolic and Catholic COMMUNION, by setting up and enjoining *OTHER terms* of *Christian FELLOWSHIP* than the GOSPEL hath enjoined, and *rejecting* those whom *CHRIST receives*.—From *this*, therefore, upon *Christian principles*, and by the command of *St. Paul* we are to *withdraw* ourselves, and to *separate*.

But to return—The manner in which the place of *Judas*, the traitor, was fitted up, *Acts i.* and in which the seven *Deacons* were chosen, *Acts vi.* shews it plainly to be the constitution of the *great FOUNDER* of the Christian Church that its *Ministers*

nisters should be appointed by the *election of the people*. An *Apostle* was an officer of *extraordinary rank*, whom it seemed in a peculiar manner the prerogative of CHRIST to appoint solely to that office; but neither doth he *do this*, nor yet order the *Apostolic College* to fill up this vacancy by their own authority and discretion; but (for an *instruction*, no doubt, to future ages) he commanded the *Christian people* (the whole number of believers, as far as appears, that were then at *Jerusalem*) to *chuse out two*, and present them before him, of whom he would appoint *one* to the vacant *Apostolate*. A strong presumptive evidence, every one must grant, in support of *popular elections*.

And when *seven Deacons* were to be appointed to manage the Church's stock; though the *Apostles* were then vested with a *fulness* of power, and had the *gift of DISCERNING SPIRITS* (in both which they have no *successors*) and were therefore far better qualified to have *chosen* persons for that office than the multitude of *Lay-Christians*; yet behold, as a standing monument to after-times in whom this *elective power* was to rest in the Church, they took not upon them authoritatively to *nominate*, but directed the *PEOPLE* to *look out seven men of good report*. In obedience to this direction, and in pursuance of their right (as the Lord's *freed men*; put into an happy state, where none were to have *authority or dominion* over others, but all were to be *brethren*) the *whole multitude*, 'tis said, *chose*, or, as you learnedly render it, *PICKED OUT of their number seven men*.——Not to differ on small things, Sir, if you allow the *Christian Laity* to *PICK OUT* their *Ministers*, as the *Apostles*, with their superior powers and gifts of *discerning*
Spirits,

Spirits, allowed the *Laity* in their times, this is all we crave.

As to the practice of the *antient* Church, 'tis not I, as you suggest, but a writer * of your own, high enough for *Church power*, who says, "That the people had votes in the choice of Bishops, all must grant, and it can be only IGNORANCE and FOLLY that pleads the contrary." I own, I am surprized at your contesting stiffly this point, when the stream of all, even your own writers, beats so violently against you. *Clemens Romanus* †, a cotemporary of the Apostles, says, they appointed Bishops, *συνευσθενάσας τῆς ἐκκλησίας πάσης*, by the consent of the whole Church. How often does *Cyprian* say, "Nihil fiat nisi consentiente plebe," Let nothing be done but by the consent of the people. Again, "Deus instruit ordinationes sacerdotales non nisi sub populi assistentis conscientia fieri oportere ‡," GOD appoints that sacerdotal ORDINATIONS should not be made without the assistance and consent of the people. Himself, he declares, chosen to his office, "Favore plebis, populi suffragio," by the favour and vote of the people. Your criticism on the word *suffragium* (which all the Learned know properly and constantly signifies a vote; as it undoubtedly does in one if not both the very instances you bring to disprove it) is too slender to deserve a particular consideration; especially as you offer not a word against that other express testimony quoted from the same Father, which indisputably shews the sense in which he uses, *suffragium*, "Plebs maximam habet potestatem vel eligendi dignos sacerdotes vel indignos recusandi," To the PEOPLE belongs the CHIEF POWER either

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ther

* Lowth.

† Epist. ad Cor. Cap. 44.

‡ Epist. 67.

ther of chusing worthy Ministers or of rejecting the unworthy. This is a testimony full to the point, which you could not gainsay, and therefore wisely overlook it.

The *Constitutions* of the Apostles decree, *That he who is to be ordained a Bishop must be CHOSEN by all THE PEOPLE as the most worthy* *.

The *Canons* called the Apostles *depofe such Bishops as are chosen by the Civil Magistrate* †.

The famous Council of *Nice*, in a synodical Epistle to the Church of *Alexandria* forbid any to be ordained Bishops without the ELECTION of the People.

The Council of *Constantinople*, anno 382, say they ordained *Nectarius*, cuncta decernente civitate, all the city decreeing it; and *Flavianus*, omni Ecclesia decernente, according to the determination of the whole Church.

The Council of *Carthage*, anno 394, say a Bishop is to be ordained, cum omni consensu Clericorum & Laicorum, with the universal CONSENT both of the Clergy and LAIETY.

Leo V. Father *Paul* ‡ confesses, has amply shewn, “ that the ordination of a Bishop could not
“ be lawful or valid, which was not required and
“ sought by the PEOPLE, and by them approved;
“ which is said by all the Fathers of those times;” and adds, Qui præfutura est omnibus, ab omnibus eligatur ||, Let him that is to preside over all, be chosen by all.

The

* *Const. Apof. L. 8. Cap. 4.*

Photio.

89, *Cap. 5.*

† *Benef, Mat, Sect, 29,*

‡ *Can. Apof. 30, in*

|| *Leon. Ep.*

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The Council of *Paris*, anno 552, require the ELECTION of the PEOPLE and Clergy, on pain of excommunication. *Chrysostom* was chosen Bishop of *Constantinople* by the common consent of all persons, Clergy as well as LAITY *. In the choice of *St. Martin*, the votes of the People carried it against the votes of the Bishops themselves, the People insisting upon their privilege †.

Finally; the mighty contests and struggles, of which ecclesiastical story is full, into which the great cities frequently fell at the election of their Bishops, put beyond all doubt the antiquity of the practice. That at *Antioch* when *Eustathius* was chosen, described by *Eusebius* (de vita Constant. L. 3. Ch. 59, 60.) where also is the Emperor's Letter to the People of *Antioch* (another memorable monument full to the purpose) exhorting them not to CHUSE *Eusebius* as their Bishop, but to think of some other person.—That at *Cæsarea* described by *Greg. Nazian.* ‡.—That at *Alexandria* by *Evagrius* §.—That at *Constantinople*, several times, by *Sozomen*, &c.—That at *Ephesus* by *Chrysostom* —At *Verfeiles* by *Ambrose*.—At *Milan* by *Socrates*.—At *Rome* by *Ammianus Marcellinus*, &c.—It hence evidently appears what the sentiments and practice were of the Churches in these antient times. So that so warm a Champion for Church-authority as your zealous Dr. *Wall* is forced to confess, “ that it is a piece
“ of history which cannot fairly be denied, that
“ amongst the primitive Christians the People used
“ to have their SUFFRAGE in the choice of
“ Church-officers; and that this is the most regular

K 2

* Socrat. Schol. L. 6. Ch. 2.
‡ Orat. 19. § L. 2 C. 6.

† Sulp. Sev. Cap. 7.

“ lar way ; that it continued *many years* ; and
 “ those Christians who have gone about to mend
 “ this way, have made it worse *.”

These, now, are the grounds on which this
right of the people stands. And thus *impregnable*
 is the post you so adventrously attack. Your rea-
 soning upon this head is truly extraordinary ; which
 in short is this, — “ A man does well who meek-
 “ ly attends the Ministry of a good, able, ortho-
 “ dox Minister, by *whomsoever* provided ; but the
 “ King, Bishops, Lord Chancellor, Gentry, &c. are
 “ MORE COMPETENT Judges of the goodness
 “ and orthodoxy of Clergymen than the common
 “ people † ;” therefore, the people ought not to
 judge for themselves in these matters, but to submit
 meekly to the determination of the King, Lord Chan-
 cellor, Bishops, &c. A most excellent doctrine ! ad-
 mirably fit to promote Popery in *Spain*, Mahome-
 tism in *Turkey*, Paganism in *Japan*. The brave
 Protestants in *France* then, I urged, have *unwar-*
rantably and *wickedly* withdrawn from the *Minis-*
ters which the King and Bishops had set over them :
 “ Yes, you reply, undoubtedly they have, if their
 “ Kings and Bishops set over them, as they do
 “ here, good orthodox Ministers.” But could you
 think, Sir, such an answer would be received with-
 out a smile ? Pray, *who is to judge* of the good-
 ness, ability, and orthodoxy of the Minister ? Not
the People themselves, according to your scheme,
 but the King and Bishops, who are MORE COM-
 PETENT JUDGES. Well then, the rulers in
France

* Dr. Wall's Hist. Inf. Bap. Vol. II. page 334. Nay, if any
Presbyter was created a *Bishop* by imperial Mandates, the people were
 enjoined to renounce him.

† II Lett. page 9. II Def. page 63.

France are more competent Judges of the goodness, ability, and orthodoxy of Ministers than their *Hugonot* subjects; to their *superior* judgments, therefore, they ought to submit.—What rare *Christianity* and *Protestanism* this! But are the *Hugonots* in *France*, I beseech you, more competent Judges of the ability of the Clergy on whom *they* ought to attend, than the people of *England*? Or have the King and Bishops *here* MORE AUTHORITY from GOD to judge for their subjects, than the King and Bishops *there*? 'Tis strange a gentleman of discernment can entangle himself in so inconsistent a scheme.

“ That the *minority* of a parish are bound to submit to the choice of the *majority*; so if *these* happen to chuse a *Popish Priest* for their pastor, *those* are obliged to receive him as such,” is an absurdity you would charge upon my *Principles* and *Reasoning* *, but is really nothing, Sir, but the production of your own imagination; there being not a syllable in my Letter favouring such submission; but it expressly claims and maintains the *right of EVERY MAN to judge and chuse for himself*.

* II Def. page 63.

S E C T. XI.

*The BURIAL OFFICE and ATHANASIAN
CREED most apparently inconsistent and repug-
nant to each other.*

WITH what truth, Sir, and justice you drew your own character as a *sorry advocate for the Church*—*, the public will judge; that you have shewn no defect of *courage*, every one must own. You proceed in what you call, your *soldierly manner* †, and like a bold and intrepid champion undertake to defend what, I believe, few except *yourself* but would desert as a quite forlorn and untenable post: And that is, your Church's *thirteen* times a year most solemnly pronouncing concerning ALL *Arians* and *Socinians* that they *CANNOT be saved, that they do WITHOUT DOUBT perish everlastingly*; and yet, with equal solemnity, pronouncing concerning these *SELF SAME persons*, dying in their heresies, that *God has in GREAT MERCY taken them to himself*, and that *you HOPE they REST IN CHRIST*. This is such a *contradiction* as, I confess, I did not expect any gentleman of *sobriety* would attempt to reconcile. But let us hear how you perform.——“ When we declare that *Arians* and “ *Socinians* perish everlastingly, our sense is, that “ their *heresies* are damnable, and that they upon “ the account of them are liable to damnation; “ notwithstanding which, there may be room for “ pardon”

* II. Def. page 128.

† Dedic. page 15.

“pardon in particular cases, and that, when one
 “of these comes to die, it may be charitably hop-
 “ed, that *his* is such a case, and we may lawfully
 “declare, that we do not quite despair concern-
 “ing him * :” That is to say, you damn the *Here-
 sise*, but save the *Heretic* : A piece of spiritual
 legerdemain, which, I own, I cannot comprehend.
 But does not all the world see, Sir, that the
Creed plainly and incontestibly refers to PER-
 sons, not to things only ; and absolutely pro-
 nounces upon THEIR *final circumstances or state* ?
 WHOSOEVER will be saved, 'tis necessary before
 all things that HE hold the faith there defined ;
 which faith, except EVERY ONE doth keep whole
 and undefiled, HE shall without doubt perish ever-
 lastingly. — Does this speak only of the *Here-
 sise*, will you say, and not expressly pronounce upon
 the CONDITION or STATE of the person who
 holds it ? And does it only say of *him*, that he is
 liable to damnation, and not that he shall without
 doubt, or most certainly, be damned ?

Again, does the *Creed* leave room to hope in par-
 ticular cases, when, at five distinct places, it de-
 termines absolutely against hope ; and in such strong
 and express language, as most evidently reaches,
 and was intended to reach, to every particular case ?
 WHOSOEVER, — EVERY ONE, — which except
 a MAN believe, — HE shall, WITHOUT DOUBT,
 perish everlastingly. If, notwithstanding these de-
 cisive and most peremptory declarations, the *Creed*
 still leaves room to hope for the salvation of the
 avowed deniers and opugners of this faith ; then the
 use of language is lost, there is no meaning in

K 4

words,

words, *truth* and *falsehood* are the same, and a man may honestly subscribe the *Koran* of *Mahomet* and reconcile it with a profession of the *Gospel* of CHRIST. Besides, what contemptible chicanery and trifling is it to talk, “ *of room for pardon and hope in PARTICULAR cases,*” when you declare solemnly *this hope* UNIVERSALLY, and in EVERY case; and to say,—“ *When ONE of these comes to die;*” when you do it over ALL when they come to die: And, “ *that you do not quite despair concerning the man;*” when you have the assurance to *thank GOD that he bath in GREAT MERCY taken him to himself,* and to pray him, *that when you die, YOURSELF may rest in CHRIST, as you hope this ARIAN or SO-CINIAN doth.* Is this the language of NOT-QUITE-DESPAIR——? Such trifling does but hurt a cause: You had much better have done here, as with the *burial office* and the *absolution*, have passed it in silence over, and not attempted to defend what every one sees to be incapable of defence.

But, the *unfeigned ASSENT and CONSENT* which you have solemnly given, and which every *Clergyman* is obliged most solemnly to give, sticks, no doubt, greatly; and makes you strain every nerve to endeavour to let it pass. Such potions, indeed, must be *bitter*; GOD grant they be not *malignant*! There is *something* in every wise man that must strongly keck against them. To numbers in your own Church it cannot but be difficult, in GOD’s *presence* and before his Church, before *angels* and *men*, to give their *unfeigned ASSENT and CONSENT* to ALL and EVERY *thing* contained in the *Athanasian Creed*, with all its explanations, limitations, and dammnatory clauses.—

A Creed,

A *Creed*, whose limitations they *condemn*; whose explications they *deride*; and whose damnatory clauses they *detest* heartily and *abhor*;—yet in GOD's *presence* and before *his Church*, I repeat it with astonishment! to declare ones *unfeigned Assent and Consent* to them ALL,—is a position, surely, which though sweetened with the noblest Church-preferments, a man might justly dread to swallow! You wonder, Sir, perhaps, to see *Deism, Infidelity, Popery*, a *corruption* of manners and *contempt* of holy things prevail throughout the land? I acknowledge, I do not: For when those who are to be the great *Examples and Teachers* of RIGHTEOUSNESS, too generally enter upon their sacred office with a dangerous violation of it; subscribing articles they do not believe; preaching contrary to their subscriptions; declaring solemnly their unfeigned assent to what they do not approve, but, it may be, heartily detest; and prostituting the holy rites and offices of their religion to *political* and *sordid* ends——Why should it be thought strange if *POPERY* and *INFIDELITY* greatly gain ground? and what wonder if they at length fatally prevail? *

K 5

S E C T.

* See a like manifest *inconsistence* betwixt the XXVth article, and the office for *confirmation*. The article says—"Confirmation has not any visible *sign* or ceremony ordained of GOD——" But the office commands the Bishop to declare, "That he hath *laid his hands* on the confirmed (after the example of the holy Apostles) to certify them by *this sign* of GOD's favour——" Behold an evident *contrariety*! But to both parts *unfeigned assent and consent* is obsequiously given!

It is something (more than) odd, a learned Bishop of your own has lately observed, to have *two Creeds* established in the *same Church*; in one of which, those are declared *accursed*, who deny the Son to be of the *SAME hypostasis* with the Father: And in the other, it is declared they

S E C T. XII.

*The Scottish Presbyterian ESTABLISHMENT
vindicated.*

IF SCHISM be so *dangerous* and *damnable* a thing as you affect to represent *; the river *Tweed*, methinks, should not bound it, nor your solemn warnings against it †; but from the profusion of your charity to the *English* Dissenters ‡, a little should extend also to your *episcopal* brethren the *Dissenters* from the *Scottish* Church. But *these*, such is your partiality, you endeavour to justify instead of censuring; yea, to justify upon such principles as certainly expose yourself to heavy censure and rebuke. You alledge,—“ That *they* did not
 “ separate from the *Presbyterians*, but the *Pres-*
 “ *byterians* from *them*,—that by tumults, false
 “ musters, and other misrepresentations of persons
 “ and things the *Presbyterians* got themselves esta-
 “ blished,—but that having *renounced* EPISCO-
 “ PACY, and their ordination being irregular,
 “ their COMMUNION can be neither *safe* nor
 “ *lawful* §.” Behold! in these last words that *schismatical dividing* spirit from which you endeavour to vindicate your Church. A severe and unchristian sentence! by which you *unchurch* at once, and cut off from Christian *fellowship* all the foreign
 reformed

they cannot be saved, but *perish* everlastingly, who do not assert that there is ONE *hypostasis* of the Father and ANOTHER of the Son—
 Essay on Spirit. §. 146.

* II Def. page 63. † Ibid. page 128.
 page 15. § II Def. pages 16, 145.

‡ Dedic.

reformed Churches, a glorious and great company, and pronounce them not to belong to the visible Church of CHRIST. They all have renounced EPISCOPACY, in your sense of the word, their ORDINATIONS therefore you declare irregular, being only Presbyterian, and their COMMUNION to be neither SAFE nor LAWFUL, i. e. it is a dangerous and wicked thing to hold communion with them: Your own sober thoughts, Sir, and the episcopal authority under which you are placed will, I doubt not, correct you for so immodest a censure. To assist the former in this good office, I would offer two things to your serious review.

1. That the very *canons* of the Church of *England*, to which you have sworn obedience, acknowledge the Church of *Scotland* to be a true Sister Church; commanding all its *Clergy* to pray for the Churches of *ENGLAND, SCOTLAND, and IRELAND as parts of CHRIST's holy CATHOLIC CHURCH, which is dispersed throughout the world. Canon LV. Note, the Church of Scotland, when these Canons were made, was Presbyterian as it is now. And,*

2. Consider, that the *Presbyterian Church* in *North Britain* is established by the *very same authority*, and rests upon the *same law* as the *episcopal Church* in *South Britain*.

The very same *Legislative Powers* which established and formed the *one*, have established the *other* likewise; if it be schism, then, rebellion and contumacy against *GOVERNORS* to separate from the latter; it is most certainly the very same to separate from the former also. As for "*Tumults and false musters by which it got itself established.*" You should have known, that the sense of

of the *Scotish* nation was, perhaps, ten times more general for *Presbyterianism*, in the reigns of K. *William* and Q. *Ann*, when that form was established there; than the sense of the *English* nation was for *Protestantism*, in the reigns of K. *Edward* and Q. *Elizabeth*, when the *episcopal* Church of *England* was formed and established here. But if the settlement of PROTESTANTISM in *England*, by the Crown and Parliament of these realms, was *valid* and *right*, even though the Bishops and Clergy were, almost *unanimously* against it: PRESBYTERIANISM in *Scotland* surely, enacted and established by the same Crown and Parliament, must be equally *valid*; especially as the voice of their Clergy as well as *Laiety* ran, not only violently, but generally that way.

A grand CONVENTION of the States in *Scotland*, at the revolution, in a claim of rights which they presented as containing the *fundamental* and *unalterable* laws of that kingdom, declare,——

“ That the reformation in SCOTLAND having been
 “ begun by a PARITY among the Clergy, all PRE-
 “ LACY in that Church was a great and unsup-
 “ portable grievance to that kingdom.” King *Wil-*
liam, however, Bishop *Burnet* * informs us, “ as-
 “ sured the *episcopal* party there, that he would do
 “ all that he could to preserve them (established)
 “ granting a full toleration to the *Presbyterians*,
 “ provided they concurred in the new settlement
 “ of the kingdom (*i. e.* in renouncing King *James*,
 “ and owning himself as their *Sovereign*.) But the
 “ Bishops and their followers resolved to adhere
 “ firmly to the interests of King *James*, and so de-
 “ claring

* Hist. of his Times, Vol. IV. pages 42, 43, duodecima.

“ claring in a body, with much zeal, in opposi-
 “ tion to the new settlement, it was not possible
 “ for the King to preserve that (episcopal) go-
 “ vernment there, all those who expressed their
 “ zeal for him, being equally zealous against that
 “ order.”

This establishment of *Presbytery* was again in the most solemn manner *enacted* and *confirmed* by the Queen (*Ann*) and Parliament of *England* when the UNION was made. You speak therefore of this affair, Sir, in more coarse and disrespectful language than is either *decent* or *true*, when you talk of *insurrections*, *false musters*, *misrepresentations*, &c. It was done upon the most *mature* and *grave* deliberations both of King *William* and Queen *Ann*, and of the *Lords* and *Commons* of both kingdoms in Parliament assembled; it has received the most sacred sanction a human law can receive; and is made as *essential* and *fundamental* a part of our present *constitution*, as the Church of *England* itself. Take heed therefore that you are not preparing a rod for your own correction; and lest by teaching men to argue away the legality and reverence of the *Presbyterian* establishment in *North Britain*, you give a second mortal stab * to the Church established here. You may please to observe also, that when you call the episcopal Dissenters there the *Church of Scotland*, 'tis with just the same propriety, decency and good sense, as if the Presbyterians should call themselves the *Church of England* here.

Hence also it appears, that what you offer in mitigation of the *Jacobitism* and *Rebellion* of the *Episcopalians* in *Scotland* (pages 16, 17.) has one
 ma-

* A deadly one you before gave. See page 7.

material flaw, which is, that it is not *founded upon TRUTH*. For you represent the loss of their establishment as being the *cause* of their disaffection; whereas, the *very REVERSE* is exactly the case; and they *therefore* lost their establishment, because they were disaffected, rejected the *revolution*, and adhered staunchly to King *James*. King *William* would have preserved them, if they would have acknowledged his government; they obstinately refused, and sell therefore a just sacrifice to their stupid attachment to a *tyrannical* and *popish* Prince.

As to the present loyalty of the two parties in that kingdom, the *Presbyterians* and *Episcopalians*, which you have drawn into comparison; you have done one of them great wrong in representing them *both* as, perhaps, *alike deeply engaged** in the late impious rebellion there. If from the disposition of the *Clergy*, that of the *Laiety* may be reasonably presumed, there are *two* important facts, to omit many other, which will dispose every impartial person, I believe, to view that affair in a very different light. One is, the *ROYAL Commander*, the Duke of *Cumberland's* Letter to the *General Assembly* at *Edinburgh*, in which he expresses a strong sense “ of the very steady and laudable
“ conduct of the *Clergy* of that Church, through
“ the whole course of that wicked and unnatural
“ rebellion; and says, I owe it to them in justice
“ to testify that upon all occasions I have received
“ from them professions of the most inviolable at-
“ tachment to his Majesty's person and govern-
“ ment, and have always found them ready and
“ forward to act in their several stations in all such
“ affairs.

* II. Def. page 15.

“ affairs as they could be useful in, tho’ often to
 “ their own great hazard——.” Upon an im-
 partial account, the balance, I believe, by every
 disinterested person, will be found to stand thus,
 ——Of the *Presbyterian* established *Clergy* not one
 in fifty in the whole body, but wished heartily suc-
 cess to the arms of his Majesty King GEORGE;
 of the *episcopal* dissenting *Clergy*, not one in fifty
 of the whole body but wished heartily success to
 the arms of *Frenchmen, Italians*, and the miscreant
 crew who came to invade and overthrow our *con-*
stitution in favour of an abjured and popish Pre-
 tender.

The other fact is, the necessity which the *Le-*
gislation have found themselves under, by new acts
 of Parliament, in two different sessions, more nar-
 rowly to watch, and to lay under fresh restraints,
 the *episcopal* Churches in *Scotland*. These are well
 known to be fruitful and fatal sources of *jacobitism*
 and *disaffection*; dangerous *seminaries* where men
 are formed and nourished up in allegiance to a
Popish Prince, and in avowed aversion and disloy-
 alty to their rightful sovereign King GEORGE.—
 Though it be too true then that there were some
 of the *Laity* of the established Church, by some oc-
 casional resentment or unhappy occurrence, hur-
 ried into that black affair; they herein departed
 from their settled and professed principles; where-
 as the *Episcopalians* acted quite *in character*, agree-
 able to the fixed sentiments and affections of their
 party, when they prayed and fought heartily for
 the destruction of our happy government, and for
 the advancement of a Popish Pretender to the
 throne. To say then, “ that the *Scotish Presby-*
terians, were, perhaps, *As deeply engaged* in the
 “ late odious rebellion as the *episcopal Dissenters*
 “ there,”

“ there,” is to scatter censures at random; to confront the plainest evidence, and to represent them (as you have done abundantly by your dissenting brethren here) in a very partial and injurious light.

S E C T. XIII.

Of the Church's AUTHORITY in Controversies of Faith.

THIS is a *claim*, which, to the grief of its real friends, and to the triumph of its foes, your CHURCH hath set up, and obliges all its Clergy solemnly to subscribe. For it is really no other than an invasion of the *DIVINE Prerogative*; and, in the language of the *HOLY GHOST*, *a sitting in the temple of GOD, shewing itself that it is GOD* *. It is a claim of *honour* as due to a company of poor *frail and fallible* men, which belongs *only* to the *omniscient and infallible* GOD; and to *CHRIST* the *sole Lawgiver and King* in the Church. It is the very *root* of Antichristianism; the *prop* upon which the whole system of Popery rests; it came from the Church of *Rome*, and *thither* it directly leads; nor can the *reformation* be ever justified, or the Church of *England* supported, upon the foot of this claim.

For if *THE CHURCH* hath authority in *controversies of faith*, the Church of *Rome*, surely, had it *BEFORE* the Church of *England*; yea, had it at the very time when the *reformation* was made. *Granmer*, then, and *Ridley*, *Luther* and *Calvin* were guilty of great petulancy and ecclesiastical rebellion,

* 2 Thef. ii. 4.

bellion, in refusing to submit to *the Church's* solemn determinations concerning *Image-worship, Transubstantiation, &c.* and in proudly setting up their own *private* opinion against the *authoritative decisions* of their ecclesiastical *SUPERIORS, to whom they owed submission, and whom they ought to have obeyed.*—This claim of your Church, Sir, I say it again, is an *unanswerable* argument in favour of *Popery*; which hath drawn thousands, no doubt, and is continually perverting multitudes from *yours* to the Church of *Rome*. Nor can all the learning or wit of the whole Clergy of the land withstand the force of a single *Jesuit*, let him be armed with and wield skilfully this dangerous weapon, the *XXth article* of your Church.

It was the fatal influence of this *article*, I observed, that seduced King *James II.* and the great *Chillingworth* into the *Romish* tents. These instances you contest with me. But as to the *first*, are guilty of an unhappy oversight, in confounding *two* things, in the quotation from *Burnet's History*, and considering them as *one*, when they are most apparently *distinct*. The *authority of the Church*, and the *tradition from the Apostles in support of Episcopacy*, are in the Bishop's account of King *James's* perversion most manifestly *two* several and different things; whereas, you would strangely have it thought, “that by the *authority of the Church*, is meant only, the *authority of its tradition or testimony concerning Episcopacy* *.” But do you not know, and did not the King know, that the *authority of the Church* is one thing, and its *tradition in support of Episcopacy* is another? Does not the Church, besides *this tradition*, claim

to

* II Def. page 137.

to itself moreover an *authority in controversies of faith*? And did not the King wisely and rightly judge, “ *that there was more reason to submit to the CATHOLIC Church, than to ONE PARTICULAR Church—?*” That if the Church of *England* had this authority, the Church of *Rome* had it long before her, and upon better grounds than she;—that if the Church of *England* by its authority might solemnly determine that *CHRIST went down into Hell*, and that *Arians* and *Socinians* are undoubtedly damned when they die, and perish everlastingly, but yet, there is hope, when they die, that they *rest in CHRIST*, and are *taken to GOD in mercy*; the Church of *Rome*, by the same authority, might solemnly determine that *images* are to be worshipped, and that a *piece of bread* is transubstantiated into the body and blood of *CHRIST*; there being nothing in the *one* at all more incredible or absurd than in the *other*—? I own I see not but, upon this principle, the King acted right; and that *every one* that believes this *XXth article* of your Church ought to follow his example, immediately forsake it, and go over to the Church of *Rome* *.

Thus did the renowned *Chillingworth*; he thought there was a necessity of an infallible living Judge

* In a debate on a bill against *Blasphemy, &c.* brought into the House of Lords, anno 1721, the Earl of *Peterborough* frankly said, Tho’ he was for a parliamentary King, yet he did not desire to have a parliamentary God, or a parliamentary Religion: And if the House were for such a one, he would go to *ROME*, and endeavour to be chosen *Cardinal*; for he had rather sit in the *Conclave*, than with their Lordships, upon those terms. *Tindal’s Hist. Eng.* Vol. IV. page 647.

Dr. *Will. Tindal* was also, by the same principles, perverted to the Church of *Rome*. Vid. Second Defence of the Rights, &c. page 79.

Judge of controversy; or, *that there always was and must be some Church upon earth that could not err*, which in other words is, *that had authority in controversies of faith*; finding therefore the Church of Rome claiming it with a better grace, and upon fairer and stronger grounds, than that of England could pretend, he too hastily went over to it; though he afterward well atoned, by his incomparable writings, for that precipitant step. "But he was too great a master of reason, you say, to take *authority* for the same thing with *infallibility*, under a different expression; and that, therefore our Church, in claiming the former, did, in effect, claim the latter *." However he took them, Sir, nothing is more plain than that they are undoubtedly *the same*. For that to whomsoever GOD gives AUTHORITY in *controversies of faith*, he gives also INFALLIBILITY, incontestibly appears hence, viz. that else a man might really have *authority* from the GOD of truth to lead men into ERROR, he might have a power, a right from Heaven to seduce and to deceive. The absurdity of which glares at first view, and needs no further to be exposed.

To talk therefore "of the Church's *limited authority* to decide controversies according to the *rule of Scripture and universal tradition*; and that these decisions (so long as they evidently contradict not that rule) oblige her members to obedience——," is quite trifling and beneath the character of a rational Divine: For who, I pray, is to judge whether the Church's decisions are, or are not, according to the *rule of Scripture and universal tradition*.—The Church herself,—

or,

or, her members? If the Church *herself*, and not *her members*; then the authority is *absolute*, a *Papist* tyranny is erected, and a blind *unlimited* obedience takes place. But if *the members* are *THEMSELVES* to judge, and no further to yield obedience than they *THEMSELVES* see the decisions to be according to the *rule of Scripture*, then all *authority* is overthrown; the determinations of the gravest *Synods* are to be weighed in the balance of every man's *private* judgment, and according as they *appear* to *HIM* to agree with Scripture or not, are absolutely to *stand* or *fall*. Betwixt *authority* and *no-authority* in matters of faith, there is no possible medium; as for *limited* and *unlimited* they are only cant expressions to which you affix no determinate ideas: nor can pretend to tell the world,—*what limits* the authority has,—*where* it is circumscribed,—in *whom* it is lodged,—and *how far* its bounds go?

Accordingly, you find that noble *champion* of the Protestant cause, when escaped from the pernicious snares in which his notions of *Church-authority* had at first unhappily entangled him, expressing himself thus,——“ For my part, after
 “ long and impartial search, I profess plainly that
 “ I cannot find any rest for the sole of my foot,
 “ but upon this rock only, namely, that the *Bible*,
 “ the *Bible*, I say *ONLY*, is the religion of *Pro-*
 “ *testants*. I see plainly and with my own eyes,
 “ that there are *Popes* against *Popes*, *Councils* a-
 “ gainst *Councils*, some *Fathers* against others,
 “ the same *Fathers* against themselves, a consent
 “ of *Fathers* of one age against a consent of *Fa-*
 “ *thers* of another age, the *Church* of one age a-
 “ gainst the *Church* of another age,—in a word,
 “ there is no sufficient certainty but of *Scripture*
 “ only

“ only for any considering man to build upon :
 “ *This* therefore, and *this only*, I have reason to
 “ believe, — I will take no man’s liberty of
 “ judgment from him ; neither shall any man take
 “ mine from me. — I am sure that GOD does
 “ not, and therefore that men ought not to re-
 “ quire any more of any man than this, *To believe*
 “ *the Scripture to be GOD’s word, to endeavour to*
 “ *find the true sense of it, and to live according to*
 “ *it **.” These are the true principles of *Protes-*
tantism and of *Christianity* to which your CHURCH
 must necessarily come back, if ever she would
 maintain her ground against the dangerous assaults
 which *Popery* is making on her ; for as long as she
 stands hampered with that perplexing and unhappy
 article (the XXth) she must remain the dupe and
 the jest of insulting *Jesuits* and *Unbelievers* ; and
 be content to see her members led in triumph away
 from her by hundreds in their snares.

S E C T. XIV.

Of the POSTURE in which our Lord and his
Apostles eat the SACRAMENTAL SUP-
 PER.

THIS is the only point I shall at present
 further consider. Concerning which I
 observe,

1. That it is most certain that they *eat it in*
their TABLE-GESTURE, whatever that was ;
 it was the *gesture* in which they were wont to
 take

* Chillingworth’s Rel. Prot. Chap. VI. Sect. 56. page 379.

take their *food* at *meals*. This is *all* we need to know, to justify our practice: Our Lord and his Apostles took the Sacrament in an *eating*, not in an *adoring* posture. Let no man, then, think himself *wiser*, nor pretend that he can take it in a more *humble*, *devout*, and *fitter* posture than **THEY**. And,

2. Though it was, perhaps, somewhat different from the posture we at present use (as there are several different ways of *sitting* in different countries and times) yet there was no word in the *English* language so proper by which to render ἀνάκλιον and ἀνάκειμενος, as *sitting*, which our translators, and I, after them, presumed to use; for which I have fallen under your rebuke.

“ You tell me, page 148, that the posture was “ *lying down or along* ;” and yet just after, “ that “ it was *with the upper part of the body erect* ; and “ advise me to try how conveniently a man may “ eat and drink in that posture.” But to *lay my body down or along*, and yet keep its *upper parts erect*, is a position so extraordinary, that without the help of some *posture-master*, or your further good instructions, I despair of ever compassing so arduous a point.

That it was the custom of the Antients, both *Romans* and *Greeks*, to **SIT** at their meals, cannot be denied; *ἡμεθα δαρυμένοι*, *Homer. Odyss.*— And *Virgil*, who wrote near the time of our Saviour, says, — *Soliti patres considerare mensis* *. *Æneid VII.* The custom of *lying* or *leaning* at table was brought in amongst the *Romans* not till the

* Porro considerare, non in lecto recumbere ad mensas heroicis temporibus, morem fuisse diximus. Not. Delp. in Loc. & in *Æneid I. L. 702.*

the primitive severity of their manners was corrupted by the effeminacy and luxury of the *East*; and even then, the posture of *sitting* was retained in their *sacred feasts* in the *capitol* *.

And as for the usage of the *Jews*, Dr. *Lightfoot*, Sir, is an authority which if, without being strongly armed, you presume to attack, the blow will surely rebound, and hurt your own self. But the learned Doctor assures us,—" That at other
 " meals they either sat, as we do, with their bodies erect, or when they would enlarge themselves to more freedom of feasting or refreshment, they sat upon the beds and leaned upon the table on their left elbow. But on the *Pas-*
 " *sover* night, they used this leaning compo-
 " sure, being the posture of free men, in memorial of their freedom.—And thus are we to under-
 " stand those texts which mention *John's* lying on *Jesus's* breast, and leaning on his bosom (*John* xiii. 25. xxi. 20.) not, as some have pictured him, reposing himself or lolling on the breast of *Jesus*, contrary to all order and decency; whereas the manner of sitting together was only thus; *Jesus* leaning on the table with his left elbow, and so turning his face and breast away from the table on one side, *John* sat in the same posture next before him, with his back towards *Jesus*; his breast not so near, as that *John's* back and *Jesus's* breast did touch one another, but at such a distance as that there was space for *Jesus* to use his right-hand upon the table, to reach his meat at pleasure; and so for all the rest, as they sat in like manner: For it is a strange fancy that they lay upon the bed
 " before

* Valer. Max. L. 2, 3.

“ before the table, one tumbling (or lolling) upon
 “ the breast of another *.”

I have now followed you, Sir, much further than I intended to have done. I hope it will not be expected that I remark upon all the weak and indefensible things your *Defences* contain; there are, I believe, five times as many as those I have here noted; upon which it would tire the reader's patience, as well as greatly try my own, particularly to touch. As for the *discipline* of the Church of *England*, its best friends I am persuaded wish, and common prudence would have advised, that you had been *quite silent* on that head. “ Who-
 “ ever thinks seriously (says one of the greatest of
 “ your present *Bishops*) of the manner, causes or
 “ objects of our *Excommunications* generally speak-
 “ ing, should methinks in pity forbear to mention
 “ the word †.” Your *ecclesiastical courts*, to whom that discipline is committed, are justly not only reckoned, but called amongst yourselves, *the very dregs of your constitution*. And upon your own honest confession of the *sandalous* and *ruined* state in which *Church-discipline* lies amongst you (quoted pages 67, 68, of my second Letter) I am well content to let that matter rest.

As for the *persecuting* and *dividing* spirit the Church of *England* has shewn, I think it the easiest of all points (and so, I believe, does every one who knows its real history) to support with abundant evidence the charges on this head. But as both *Churchmen* and *Dissenters*, 'tis hoped, are
 now

* Lightfoot's Temp. Serv. Chap. xiii. Vid. also Rainold. Censura de Libris Apoc. Prælect. 79. Altare Damascen. Cap. x. page 552.

† Answer to the Represent. pages 38, 39.

now growing into a better spirit, and their common interest as *Britons*, as *Protestants*, and as *Christians*, calls loudly for a stricter union; I wave, at present, any further prosecution of a point which might rather tend to widen than heal the unhappy breach. Upon your own principles as to *persecution* also I forbear to remark, though most easy to be proved both unprotestant and unchristian, the merits of the cause betwixt us being little concerned therein.

If *this review* of the controversy, which your *Letters* have called up, shall be a means of holding forth to both the contending parties the several defects of their *ecclesiastical* constitution, and of rendering them more candid and benevolent to each other; and shall at all prepare the way for a *coalition* betwixt them, I shall think it an auspicious and very happy event.

“ The readiness which, you say, my Lords the *Bishops* have shewn, and will shew, to come to “ a temper with their *dissenting brethren* *,” will, I doubt not, be very gratefully and delightfully accepted by them, and returned by a correspondent readiness to lay aside all prejudice (for prejudices, I am free to own there, doubtless, are amongst us) and to comply with any just and reasonable proposals for the accomplishing so important and valuable an end.

I hear it with great pleasure, if what you speak is upon good authority,——“ That if parting with “ the ceremonies, and taking away a few indifferent things will close the breach, you are satisfied that it will not long remain open——†.”

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And

* Dedic. page 12.

† Ibid. pages 13, 14.

And in return declare, I verily believe that if *such condescensions* as a great part of our Governors both in Church and State would, I presume, think not *unreasonable* to make, were made to the Dissenters, there would no unbecoming *stiffness* or *aversion* be shewn by the most considerable part of them. May Heaven dispose the *minds* of all who have *power* to further and help on this desirable event ! *that with one mind, and with one mouth, we may glorify God,* and unite our common zeal against a growing common enemy ; and may *receive one another, but not to doubtful disputations !* For if we still continue to worry and weaken one another, there is reason to fear lest we finally be destroyed one of another. These things I recommend, Sir, to your consideration : and shall only farther say, that as I have not been able ; and am persuaded never shall be ; to get you to speak out, and openly and plainly tell us,—*who* you mean by the CHURCH, “ to “ which Dissenters owe subjection, which hath “ power to decree rites, and authority in points “ of faith ; and by withdrawing from, and re- “ jecting the authority of which we are guilty of “ a dangerous and damnable sin——.” Whether it is the Pope with his Cardinals ; or the King with his Parliament ; or the Archbishop with his Bishops ; or the Bishop of every diocese with his Dean and Chapter attending.——Nor will you so much as pretend to shew us the *charter* which has vested them with this high power,——nor will say, to what things, or how far it extends,——though these are *essential* points upon which the controversy betwixt us entirely depends : You must excuse me from paying any farther regard to your lucubrations on these things. I have neither time nor
inclin-

inclination to dispute about a scheme which you affect to wrap in obscurity, and which you are afraid to lay open and avow before the world. I here therefore take my leave of the present debate. But though I chuse not to bear you company in the disagreeable employment of *groping in the dark*, you will nevertheless believe me, Sir, to be

With unfeigned Respect,

Your very humble Servant,

A DISSENTER.

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THE
Dissenting Gentleman's
POSTSCRIPT
TO HIS
Three LETTERS to Mr. WHITE.

S I R,

THE extraordinary remark which introduces your *Appendix*—That views of *worldly interest* incourage and support our *dissent* from the establishment—I shall leave to the universal laugh of your readers, for a confutation; and pass on to points of greater moment in debate.—To begin with your *first*. Of CHURCH-POWER, and in whom lodged.

The Church of E——d claims, in her *articles* and *canons* * to have power from GOD, to *decree* OTHER *ceremonies* and *rites of worship*, and to *make* OTHER *terms of Christian communion* than either *Christ* or his *Apostles* ever made or

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* Art. XX. and Can. XXVII, XXIX, XXX.

decreed ; and to have authority in controversies of faith.

This high and important power she sovereignly exerts : You, as her zealous advocate, endeavour to support her in it ; and charge all the *Dissenters* as guilty of a very crying and dangerous sin, in not submitting thereto. The *Dissenters*, I have told you, will readily own the charge, and return immediately to your Church, if you will gratify them in these two most reasonable requests. 1. Tell them plainly, WHO, and WHAT it is, you mean by the CHURCH ? And, 2. Prove it, to have this power vested in it by GOD.

Your advocates for Church-power, I know, love always to deal in *generals* ; and will twist a thousand ways, rather than explain their scheme, and be forced to speak out : But you, Sir, being a gentleman of singular intrepidity ; and affecting to do things in, what you call, a soldierly manner, when your late *Appendix* came forth, protesting to treat expressly of Church-power, and in whom lodged ; I hoped to see the point, all disguises apart, openly and frankly handled ; and that a certain judgment might now be formed what your sentiments were. But, alas, vain were these hopes ! Not all the invitations and provocations I have used, can draw you from the darkness where you artfully lurk. Tho' the regard you owe to truth, to justice, to the souls of your dissenting brethren, and to your own reputation, most strongly obliged you to it ; yet you have not, durst not honestly and fairly tell us—WHO the persons are whom GOD hath trusted with this power ; nor have produced the least shadow of a charter from Heaven, investing them with it.

In

In most manifest contradiction, indeed, to our *constitution*; our *laws*; our *articles* and *canons*, to which you have solemnly sworn and subscribed; and even to your *very SELF* (as I shall presently shew) you continue to affirm—"That this power is NOT AT ALL in the *Civil Magistrate*; that he hath declared and recognised it *not* to be in himself; but is solely in the *Pastors* and *Governors* of the Church."—But when I once and again press and provoke you to say, WHO these *Governors* and *Pastors* are—Are they the *Archbishops*; or the *Bishops*; or the *Deans* and *Chapters* of every diocese; or the *Priest* in every parish; or the *Clergy* met in *convocation*?—You are four, and will not answer. No, if *Dissenters* must have these knotty points solved, let them seek it from other hands.—

But what idea, Sir, will *the Public* form of a *Scholar*, a *Divine*, a some-time *Fellow* of a learned *College*, arraigning us before its bar, as guilty of *high crimes* in not submitting to *Church-power*; writing tract upon tract to persuade and reduce us to it; coming forth with an *Appendix* professing to treat expressly of *Church-power* and in whom lodged; and yet, with all this parade, not capable of being induced to say—WHO *it is* he means by these *Pastors* and *Governors*, to whom, under peril of everlasting damnation, we are bound to submit.

I observe, you rank yourself with *the Learned*, and claim *precedence* amongst them.—"I, and another learned gentleman*" (*Ego, & Rex meus*) But will not the *Learned* disclaim you; and treat your lucubrations as an egregious impertinence;

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who can thus double and evade, and meanly refuse to speak to the one single point, on which they all see the whole controversy turns? Must not all your pretended charity, and lamentation over our *straying souls*, appear to an high degree ridiculous, and perfect grimace? *Dissenters* dangerously sin, in rejecting a *power* ordained by *Almighty GOD*: They profess themselves ready to yield it submission, if shewn where it is: Mr. *White*, their pretended friend, knows the grand secret; but no prayers can wrest it from him; he is close and demure; and leaves them to wander on, and sin, and perish in the dark.

But to examine your romantic scheme, as far as conjecture can pick it out.—The Church's *Pastors and Governors* are *ALONE* possessed, you say, of *this power*. By its *Governors*, 'tis presumed, you mean its *Bishops*; and by *Pastors*, its *Priests*. Every parish *Priest* then, (your good *SELF*, Sir, amongst the rest) and every *Bishop* of this land, is vested with this *high power*: viz. a power of *decreeing* *OTHER* rites and ceremonies in divine worship, and of *injoining* *OTHER* terms of *Christian communion*, than either *CHRIST* or his *Apostles* decreed or enjoined; and of *pronouncing* *AUTHORITATIVELY* in *controversies of faith*. This, you will note carefully, is the *power* in dispute betwixt us. This the *power* which your Church exerts: This the *Power* you claim for her; and which you affirm is vested *solely*, (if I understand your scheme) in its *Bishops and Priests*.

But, pray, give me leave to ask—How do they possess it! *separately* or *conjunctly*? It must be one of these. Has every *Priest* within his parish; and every *Bishop* within his diocese, a *right* to exercise this power, *separately* and *apart* from others?

Or,

Or, must they assemble in common *council*, and by joint *suffrage* and *consent* issue forth their determinations; to which the consciences of all the faithful are bound to submit? Not *separately* and *apart*, 'tis presumed you will say, but in *convocation* convened.

Accordingly, you lay, I observe, a mighty stress upon the CONVOCATION's *consent* to the Act of Uniformity, and the present established forms; and seem to represent *this* as that which alone gave *authority* to both; and that as long as this *consent* of the *convocation* was withheld (as for a considerable time it was) so long the reformation "was a measure not quite *canonical* nor *ecclesiastically* right" — That it was a going a little awry into some "illegal or extra-legal ways"—That the King's "supremacy, on that occasion, was raised to an *undue height*, and such as *ought not* to be drawn "into example at other times.—That most, if "not all, the reviews and alterations which have "been since made, have been made by the *Bishops* "and *Clergy*, in, or by the authority, or with "the concurrence of the *Convocation* (your great "mistake, here, you will presently see) and if "our Governors shall at any time think fit to "subject it, to any other alterations or reviews, "you will not suffer yourself to doubt, but they "will be made by *ecclesiastical* and even *synodal* "authority, before the *civil sanction* be added to "them*."

The authority of the *Convocation* is, I see, the phantom that haunts your mind, and has *distorted* strangely your thoughts, on this subject of *Church-power*. I will candidly endeavour your illumination.

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tion on this point; as I have the satisfaction to hope, I have, not without good effect, attempted it on some other.

Before you had taken on you, Sir, to write about *Church-power*, you ought to have known—That, by the constitution and laws of *England*, the *Convocation* is really no part of its *Government*; no branch of its *ruling-powers*; has no share of its *legislative* authority at all. To be amply convinced of this, I shall lead you to authorities which you will have no *countenance* nor *power*, however strong your *inclination* may be, to contest. To some great ones, in the *law*, you have already been directed*, which you have (and with good reason) *not* presumed to dispute. Turn your attention, now, to some of your own *Bishops*, the ornament, the supports, the glory of your Church: Who were honoured with the first rank among those *Pastors* and *Gouvernors*, with whom *alone* you declare *Church-power* is lodged.

A gentleman of your erudition hath, no doubt, heard, at least, of the writings of those venerable names *Burnet*, *Kennet*, *Nicholson*, *Hody*, and particularly *Wake*, your late excellent Archbishop, on this subject of the *Convocation*.

A due attention to their learned *researches* on this point, will effectually ease your mind of the errors it labours under. From the *last* of these great persons, I shall present you with a few *extracts*, to set right your misapprehensions as to the real constitution and nature of your *Church*; which you seem (excuse my freedom) extremely unacquainted with, and not at all to understand.

To

* Dissent, Gent. 1 Lett. page 10.

To root up, and destroy for ever, the dangerous absurdity of *two* independent powers (i. e. the power you are claiming for your *Pastors* and *Governors*, independent of the *Civil Magistrate*) the wisdom of our legislature hath enacted and decreed, “ by the statute 25 *Henry VIII.* called the “ *Act of SUBMISSION.* 1st. That the *Convocation* should from thenceforth be assembled only “ by the *King’s writ.* 2dly. That it should make “ no *canons* or *constitutions* but by virtue of the “ *King’s licence*, first given them, so to do. 3dly. “ That having agreed on any *canons* or *constitu-* “ *tions*, they should yet neither *publish* nor *execute* “ them, without the *King’s confirmation* of them. “ Nor, 4thly. By *his authority*, execute any, but “ with these limitations; that they be neither a- “ gainst the *King’s prerogative*, nor against any “ *common* or *statute law*; nor, finally, in any o- “ ther respect contrary to the *customs* of the “ realm.” Vid. *Wake’s Appeal*, &c. page 4.

The learned *Metropolitan* further informs you *
 —“ That Christian Princes have a right; and
 “ from *Constantine* the Great, down thro’ suc-
 “ ceeding ages, have exerted the right; not only
 “ of exercising authority over *ecclesiastical* persons,
 “ but to interpose in ordering *ecclesiastical* affairs
 “ —That when the *Civil Magistrate* advised
 “ with the Clergy about calling a *Synod*, it was
 “ not looked upon as a matter of *right*; but that
 “ he often called *Synods* without such advice:
 “ And when the Bishops have earnestly desired a
 “ *Council*, and it has been refused by the Magis-
 “ trate, they have submitted, and not reckoned
 “ them-

* *Wake’s Authority of Christian Princes*, &c. page 10.

“ themselves to have a *right* to meet without his
 “ leave——When a *Synod* was resolved on, the
 “ *Prince* determined, or allowed, the time and
 “ place of meeting, and what *persons* should come
 “ to them——When *Synods* are assembled, he
 “ shews, the *Civil Magistrate* has a right to pre-
 “ scribe the *matters* on which they are to debate;
 “ as also the *manner* and *method* of their proceed-
 “ ings in them; and, if he pleases, to sit in, and
 “ preside over them; or to appoint his *Commis-
 “ sioner* to do it in his stead. (Thus *Ed. Cromwell*,
 “ a Lay-person, sat in, and presided over the *Con-
 “ vocation* for the King, *Hen. VIII.*) They can-
 “ not *dissolve* themselves, nor *depart* from Coun-
 “ cil but by the King’s *licence*——Their defini-
 “ tions are *no further obligatory*, than as ratified
 “ and confirmed by *CIVIL Authority*.——That
 “ the *Prince* is not obliged to confirm whatever
 “ the *Clergy* shall think fit to determine; but has
 “ a power of annulling and rejecting what they
 “ have done; to alter or improve, to add to or
 “ take from it.——He denies the *inherent* autho-
 “ rity of the Church to make any synodical *autho-
 “ ritative* definitions; or that the sitting of *Con-
 “ vocations* is any right of the Church.——And
 “ says, that as even the King’s *licence* cannot give
 “ the *Convocation* authority to promulge or exe-
 “ cute any *canons*, but what are agreeable to the
 “ *customs* and *laws* of the realm; so he ought to
 “ submit them to the examination of his Council
 “ *learned in the law*; by them to be *advised*, whe-
 “ ther they are thus agreeable, before he confirms
 “ them *.”

So

So that the *Convocation*, you see, are not so much as the King's *supreme Council* in *ecclesiastical* affairs. There are *others* who are to judge *after* them; to sit as a check *above* them; to inspect, controul, approve or reject the *advice* they give the King; even his Council *learned in the law*.

The Archbishop adds——“ That as the King
 “ has power, without a *Convocation*, to make and
 “ publish such injunctions as HE *shall think* the
 “ necessities of the Church to require, and to *com-*
 “ *mand* the observance of them; So he may, with
 “ the advice and consent of his Parliament much
 “ more, (i. e. I apprehend, he may *without*,
 “ much more *with*, their advice and consent)
 “ make what *ecclesiastical laws* he shall think fit-
 “ ting, for the discipline of the Church; and may
 “ alter, correct, disallow, or confirm the resolu-
 “ tions of the *Convocation* according to *his own*
 “ liking *.”

And, finally, he gives a list of a great number of *alterations*, *reviews*, and *reformations* in ecclesiastical matters, which have been done entirely by SELECT COMMITTEES, without any advice or consent of a *Convocation* (through all the several reigns of *Hen. VIII. Edw. VI. Q. Eliz. James I. and Charles I.*) When the King having first appointed a certain number of *Bishops* and *Clergymen* (whether they shall be *Clergy* or *Laity*, or what number of *each*, is entirely in *his* choice) to consider *what may be fit* to be ordered, then enjoins it by his *royal authority*. And adds (directly contrary to what you assert) That AFTER THIS
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MANNER, viz. by *select committees*, (and Acts of Council) the reformation of the Church of *England* was in great measure carried on, and its *most important affairs* transacted *. And in his *Appendix*, No. VII. he presents you with a long catalogue of *canons*; *injunctions*; new *translations* of the Bible; *articles of religion* set forth; *explications* made of them; *examinations* of ceremonies; *homilies* composed; *prayers* sent to the Archbishop, with orders for their public use; *visitations* of the whole kingdom, with an entire suspension of *episcopal jurisdiction*; (The *Visitors* were two gentlemen, a Civilian, a Register, and only one *Divine*. *Echard's Hist. Eng.* page 300.) new *offices of communion*; *other offices* reformed; new *catechism* drawn up, &c. &c.—All done by *private commissions*, or otherwise, out of CONVOCATION †. So that the *Clergy in Convocation* have not the least ground to *claim* as a RIGHT to be consulted in any future reformations or reviews. If the government shall indulge them with *leave* to assemble, and

* *Wake's Auth. of Chr. Fr. &c.* page 256. The King, says *Fulker*, would not intrust the *Convocation* with a power to meddle with matters of *Religion*, from a just jealousy he had of the ill affection of the major part thereof; who, under the *fair rind* of Protestant profession, had the *rotten core* of *Romish* superstition. It was therefore conceived safer for the King to rely on the ability and fidelity of some *select confidants*, cordial to the cause of *Religion*, than to adventure the same to be discussed and decided by a suspicious *Convocation*. *Cb. Hist. Book VII.* page 421.

† *Whether?* And in *what method*, our present Governors may think proper to attempt any further *reviews*, I presume not to guess: But, perhaps may be allowed to say, That whoever knows the real *History of English CONVOCATIONS*; and observes the *narrow* and *bigotted spirit*; the *petulant, censorious, uncatholic and rigid temper*, which has ever generally prevailed *there*; especially, in its inferior members; will indulge but faint hopes of *reformation* from that quarter.

and to give their sentiments on these things, it is to be gratefully received, as a matter of *grace*, not of *right*; and to be used with due humility and deference to the ROYAL *Judgment*; in which the SUPREME *ecclesiastical Wisdom* is by our constitution declared, and by all our Clergy acknowledged to reside.

By this time, no question, Sir, you have an humbler and juster sense of the *power* of a *Convocation*; and perceive it to be no part of our *government*, and that it has no *legislative* power or authority in these realms.

Your favourite *fantastic* scheme, then, “ of *Pastors and Governors having the SOLE POWER as to Church-matters; and that the Civil Magistrate has NONE AT ALL* *,” is really, you now see, of very *dangerous* and *important* consequence; actually subversive of our present happy *constitution*; wrests from the *King and Parliament* an high branch of their *prerogative*; impeaches their *supreme authority*; attempts to set up *another* legislative power; and is a deep *indignity* cast upon our *reformation* from *POPERY*, which was effected *ONLY* by the *Civil Magistrate*, your boasted *Pastors and Governors* struggling vehemently against it. Are *these* the returns you make for the indulgence of that government, by whose favour you live at ease upon the labour and sweat of others!——

The times of *Hen. VIII. Edw. VI. and Qu. Eliz.* you say, were extraordinary times, and the *regal supremacy* was then raised to an *undue height*. But, see how the case stood, when the Church was in the zenith of its prosperity and power! I mean
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at the passing the *Act of Uniformity* of Charles II. In the preamble of which you have the sentiments of the legislature, and of that your *most religious King*, which recites to this effect——“ That the
 “ book of *Common-prayer*, &c. having been in-
 “ joined to be used by the statute 1st *Elizab.* and
 “ since that by the neglect of Ministers, great in-
 “ conveniences and schisms having happened ; for
 “ prevention thereof, and for settling the peace of
 “ the Church, &c. the King had granted his com-
 “ mission to some Bishops and other Divines to re-
 “ view the *Common-prayer-book*, and to prepare
 “ such alteration and advice as they thought fit to
 “ offer. And that afterward his Majesty having
 “ called a Convocation, and having been pleased
 “ to *authorize* and *require* them to review the same
 “ book, and make such alterations as to them
 “ should seem meet, and to exhibit and present
 “ the same to his Majesty, for his further *allow-*
 “ *ance* or *confirmation* ; and the same having been
 “ done ; his Majesty hath *duly considered*, and fully
 “ *approved* and *allowed* the same ; and recommen-
 “ ded to this present Parliament that the same shall
 “ be *appointed* to be used in all Churches,—Where-
 “ upon it is enacted, &c.”

See here, how poor a figure *the power* of your *Convocation* makes when shining in its highest glory ! The Clergy are *authorized* and *required* by the King to propose alterations in Church-ceremonies and forms, for HIS CONSIDERATION and ALLOWANCE, as *Supreme Head* of the Church. The King *approves* and *allows* such of them as he thinks fit ; but in order to their having power at all to oblige the members of the Church, the King recommends them to his Parliament ; who turn them into a *law*. And thus only they acquire all their
 their

their *obliging* force. What, now, did the Clergy in all this affair! but give their advice. Which might have been taken, or refused: So Lawyers, incapable of voting in Parliament, are often *consulted* in forming and making laws; shall they therefore set up for a share in the *legislative* power; and exalt themselves from *subjects* to be *rulers* in the state?

And when a most happy *alteration* was, afterward, made in this law, by the *Act of Toleration*; which so deeply affected the forms and ceremonies of the Church, with regard to a great number of the subjects of this kingdom, pray, tell me! What hand had the *Convocation* and *Clergy* in that important *Church-affair*?

And as forms of *worship*; so matters of *faith* are enacted into laws, judged and punished, entirely by the *Civil Magistrate*, without any intervention or assistance of the *Clergy*. By the statute of 9th and 10th of *William III.* it is enacted,——That if any person shall be convicted in the Courts of *Westminster*, or at the *Affizes*, of denying any one of the persons of the *Trinity* to be GOD: Or, of maintaining that there are more GODS than one: Or, of denying the *Christian* religion, or the authority of the *Scriptures*; he shall forfeit—be imprisoned, &c.——Here, again, you see the jurisdiction and decision of the great *articles of faith* declared by Parliament to be in the *Lawyers*.

And as to the punishment of *vice* and *irreligion*, the statutes against drunkenness, cursing, swearing, the breach of the sabbath, &c. sufficiently shew that the Parliament and Common-law Courts have taken to themselves the cognizance of *these*. And what now becomes of your *ecclesiastical* dominion
and

and *canonical* settlement for above 200 years? When it has been, and might in innumerable other instances be shewn, that the King and Parliament have all along claimed and exerted a *supreme* right in matters of religion, faith, worship, and practice. Your *ecclesiastical Courts*, indeed, are sometimes permitted to take cognizance of some of these matters; but then it is to be remembered. 1. That these are the *King's Courts*; to be held only in his name. 2. The *Judges* in these Courts often are, always may, and (say many of your most learned Clergy) ought *ever* to be *Laymen*. And, 3. The King, whenever he pleases, stays their proceedings; grants *prohibitions*; takes causes out of them, and removes them into his Courts of common-law.—What, now, is become of the *original, radical JURISDICTION*, which you claim for your *Pastors* and *Governors*!

But to return to the *Convocation*,—Our excellent *Constitution*, you see, hath with great sagacity circumscribed its power, and reduced it to a mere shadow, or just nothing at all. *Ecclesiastical Synods*, from the famous *Council of Nice*, down to the not-famous *Convocation of L—n*, anno 1717. sad experience hath shewn to have been little else than the pests and troublers of mankind; mints where pernicious *errors* have received the stamp of authority, and been sent out to corrupt the Church, and to set the world in flames; and that, for the most part, they have been *conventions* of interested, ambitious, factious and angry men; who under a fair pretence of *zeal for the Lord of Hosts*, have been driving furiously and foully on in pursuit of worldly views; and with an affectation of being thought *contending earnestly for the faith*, have been only contending, like the Disciples, who should be

greatest

greatest among themselves. This the wisdom of our *Legislature* knew to have been the *manner*, the *practice* immemorial, of ecclesiastical *Synods*; and therefore guarded, with great discretion, against the portentous evil; denied them all *legislative* power; subjected them entirely to the authority of the *Civil Magistrate*; and thus hardly restrained them from throwing, as they have often done, the world into confusion; and filling the Church with everlasting debates.

And now, Sir, having thus laboured your edification, in a point of high importance, where, 'tis certain, you greatly needed it; by this time you begin to see, not the *futility* only, but the *presumption*, and the real *danger* of your scheme. That it is a suggestion as *groundless*, as it is *ungrateful* and *ill-timed*, that our reformation was not effected in a *legal* and *right* manner. You see, that, by representing the *Magistrate* as having no power in *Church-matters*, you undermine that *glorious structure*; betray it into *Popish* hands; and subvert the very foundation of your own admired Church: And that by laying so *essential* a stress, as you do, upon the *Convocation's* assent to the Act of *Uniformity*, by which the *reformation* and the *present Church* was established, you suggest to a crafty *Jesuit* unanswerable matter to insult and expose *both*. For, pray, the *Jesuit* will ask, How was that *assent* of the Convocation obtained? Was it not by the *Magistrates* *depriving* the holy *Bishops*; and *thrusting out* the Church's *Pastors* from those seats, and from that authority which GOD had given them therein? And can the *assent* of a Convocation thus *packed* by the *Magistrate*, make that *legal*, *canonical*, and *ecclesiastically right*, which
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was before illegal, uncanonical, and ecclesiastical-ly wrong?

Besides, to talk of the *Convocation's* ASSENT and CONCURRENCE, is language altogether *un-constitutional*, and has a great deal too *assuming* and *presumptuous* an air. *Submission*, Sir, and *obedience* is all the Convocation was *capable* of giving. The *King* may give his *assent*, and either House of *Parliament* may give their *assent*, and thereby confirm and give authority to any Act: But should the Magistrates of a country town talk of FURTHER *confirming* it by THEIR *concurrence* and *assent*; which would they most provoke, your indignation or your mirth? And yet, the *corporation* of a *Cornish* burrough, Sir, has, as much *right*, by our constitution, to talk of *ratifying* by their *assent* any law of the Crown, as the *Convocation* itself*.

And hence, by the way, you see the extreme vanity of your imagination——“ That the Civil “ Magistrate, by ratifying the XXth article, hath “ recognized and owned *the power* to be not in “ *himself*, but in *the Church*†”——i. e. as you are pleased to understand it, in *the Clergy*. By what Logic, Sir, do you make *the Church*, in that article, to mean *the Clergy*? Are not the LAITY also an *essential* part of the *Church*? Does not the very preceding article, XIXth, expressly declare they are? Defining the Church——*to be a congregation*

* The *Convocation* never gave their assent at all to the *articles of religion* in K. *Edward's* reformation. And all the assent they ever gave to Q. *Elizabeth's* (as far as I can find) was the setting forth the *articles*, which was not done till *January 1563*: Whereas the reformation was established by the first of *Eliz. January 1558*. Vid. *Fuller's Ch. Hist. B. IX. pages 52 and 72.*

† I Def. page 17. Appen. page 5.

gation of faithful men——But, would you impute to the *Magistrate* so tame, so absurd, so ridiculous a part, as publickly to *disown* himself to have *any* power in Church-matters: Yea to *deny* himself to belong to the *congregation of the faithful*! Yes; with astonishment be it seen, this is what you are not ashamed openly to impute to him. “For the “King and Parliament, you say, have plainly “*disowned* any such power, as we are speaking of, “in *themselves*; and recognized it to be in the “*Church*, and no body imagines that by *the* “*Church* they mean *themselves**.”——But if by declaring it to be in *the Church*, they have *disowned* it to be in *themselves*; they have, thereby, also *disowned* themselves to be of the *congregation of the faithful*; for *this congregation* they declare to be *the Church*, to whom *this power* belongs. Besides; this is supposing *the KING* to *disown* and *give up* a power which the whole Legislature hath solemnly vested in him; and which every *Bishop* and *Ecclesiastic* in the kingdom (till the time of K. William) did swear, that he believed in his conscience to be true, under the penalty of a *premunire*, viz. “That the King is the only *supreme* “GOVERNOR of this realm; as well in all *spiritual* or *ecclesiastical* things or causes, as *temporal*; and that they will assist and defend him “in such jurisdiction and authority.”

See, now, the hopeful state to which you have brought the *Civil Magistrate*! You have made him to divest himself of *all power* as to Church matters, and to recognize it to be in *you*, the *Clergy*. He is now, therefore, in all these affairs, to be subject to *you* his HIGHER POWERS. You have authority

* I Def. page 17.

rity from GOD to make *laws*, and to prescribe *rites*, which Kings and Parliaments are to obey: *To bind your Kings in chains*, spiritual, ecclesiastic *chains*——Rise up, O ye Kings, to these your *Pastors* and *Governors*! be instructed, and pay homage to their *spiritual* decrees! This doctrine was the happy engine, which hath often lifted *humble* Bishops, to the *high* places of the earth; hath made *Kings* bow down before them, and subjected *Emperors* to their feet.

Ecclesiastical affairs, Sir, you are too sagacious not to know, take in a mighty compass; and very naturally comprehend the *principles*, the *manners*, the whole *social* and *moral* conduct, of those over whom these holy Pastors are to *watch*. Thus the *Priests of the Church* have exalted themselves, for many ages, to be *Princes of the world*; and by claims of *spiritual* power, have hooked in enormous shares of *temporal* grandeur and wealth. But, is this a *proper time*, think you, to revive and to press pretensions of this kind? Thank Heaven, that darkness is passed! The light of Christian *liberty* dawns gloriously upon us; and exposes all such *fanatic* claims to just scorn and reproach.

But——I press you no farther——You begin to relent. Having urged you with the weight of your XXXIVth *article*, which you have frequently subscribed; and of your XXXth *canon* to which you have solemnly sworn; both which declare positively, *your Church ceremonies to be ordained by the authority of the CIVIL MAGISTRATE*; you are, at length, constrained to own their force. But, without the honour of retracting your former dangerous assertion, “*That the Magistrate has no such power at all* *.” You are now brought to acknowledge

* I Def. pages 18, 19.

knowledge——“ That the truth of the case is, “ all our ceremonies, and forms of worship, are “ ordained, as they ought to be, BOTH by eccle- “ *siastical* and CIVIL authority *.” Honestly said at last ! Well, if by *civil* authority, then the Ma- gistrate has *some power* in ordering *Church-matters*; which you have all along denied him ; and then the power is not vested *solely* in the Pastors and Governors, as with great pertinacity you have insisted it was. *Render then to Cæsar, the things which are Cæsar’s* ; and lift not up your heel a- gainst the hand by whose bounty you are so libe- rally fed.

You are now willing, I find, to compromise the matter, and to go shares with the *Magistrate*, in the enjoyment of this power ; and presume to talk of an “ ALLIANCE, and of TERMS on which “ it stands, betwixt the State and the Church †.” This ALLIANCE, Sir, is a mere *phantom*, con- jured up by the strength of a late warm imaginati- on, to preserve at least a *shadow* of its lost power to the Church ‡. Neither our *history*, nor our *laws* know any thing at all of it. The nature of our *constitution* utterly disowns it ; and avows the Church to be *not an ALLY*, but a SUBJECT to the state. An ALLIANCE supposes *independency* in the powers betwixt whom it stands. But, by the famous *Act of Submission*, the Church hath re- signed all pretensions to *Independency* ; and given up its powers into the hands of the State. The truth of the case is this. A few centuries past, the Church was found guilty of a dangerous *rebel- lion* and *high-treason* against the state : Whilst it
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* Appen. page 13.

† Ibid.

‡ See a late excel-
lent Comment on WARBURTON’S *Alliance*, &c.

lay thus at mercy, as a criminal before its Judge, its pardon and life were given it, *upon the TERMS* of its resigning all claims of *independency*, and submitting itself thenceforward to the will of the Prince. But behold! these *terms of submission*, you have now, it seems, refined into *terms of alliance*; and the Church from a *pardoned criminal*, now aims to be a *rival power*; and to have its rights and jurisdiction *independent* of the State. “ Our ceremonies and forms of worship are ordained by ECCLESIASTICAL, as well as CIVIL authority.” But these, alas! are but illusions which mock your heated fancy; for *ecclesiastical* authority, as distinguished from *civil*, you may rest assured, there is none. Ask your learned *Bishops*, and they will utterly disclaim it. Ask your able *Lawyers*; and they will tell you, that you incur the danger of a *premunire* by presuming to exert any one single act of authority of this kind. Ask all the knowing members of the *Covocation* itself, and they will answer, with one voice, ‘Tis not in us——AUTHORITY we have none. Yea; Ask the meanest *novice* in the history of the *reformation*, and of the *establishment* of your Church; and he will presently acquaint you, that your *ceremonies and forms* were NOT ordained by BOTH *ecclesiastical and civil* authority; but by *civil* authority ONLY: The *Ecclesiastics* in *Convocation*, and in the *two Universities*, obstinately *refusing* to give their concurrence; and even entering their very solemn and zealous protest against it.

But, you are still harping that the *Convocation* at last gave their assent. Pray! how did they give it? Not till they had been first garbled and packed by the Magistrate: All the *Bishops*, save one, exiled,

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exiled, imprisoned, turned out, by his authority; and *new*, according to his taste, put into their room; besides, the invincible artillery of *Deaneries, Prebends*, snug and fat *Livings* played strongly upon the inferior *Clergy*: Many *Dignitaries* amongst these, also, being *deprived* by the civil power. And, is it strange that the *Convocation*, thus powerfully attacked, made no long resistance; but yielded, however *reluctant*, to what the *Parliament* had done *? But their concurrence, I must again tell you, whether *free* or *forced*, gave, and could give, *no AUTHORITY* to the *new establishment*; because, by our constitution, they had not the least grain of *AUTHORITY* to give. Suppose the *Convocation* had refused their concurrence to that act of the Legislature; would the law not have had its force? You dare not affirm it. Suppose, again, the *Clergy* had established any *new forms*, without an *Act of Parliament*; would the people have been obliged to yield obedience to them? neither durst you assert this.

However, not to discourage good beginnings, I will take you where you are——We are come, then, to this issue. That the *civil Magistrate* has power to ordain *ceremonies and rites of worship*, and to make *new terms* of Christian communion; and that the things of this kind which are done in the

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* Hear what even *Echard*, who was never suspected of *Partiality* against the *Church*, says——“ Fourteen *Bishops*, twelve *Deans*, “ twelve *Archdeacons*, fifteen *Heads of Colleges*, fifty *Prebendaries*, “ and eighty *Rectors*, were deprived by the *QUEEN*. But ‘t was “ strongly believed, that, of the rest, the greatest part complied “ against their consciences; and would have been ready for another “ turn, if the *Queen* had died while that race of *Incumbents* lived, “ and the next successor had been of another religion.” *Echard’s* *Hist. Eng.* page 330.

Church of *England*, are done, at least in part, by *CIVIL* authority. This is what you now grant. But the *question* then returns, with unanswerable weight upon you——*WHO* gave him *this power*? *WHAT* charter hath lodged it in him? Not, surely, the *Scriptures*; the only charter of the *Christian Church*. For all the *power* or *authority* which the *Scriptures* give the *Magistrate* relates only, and can relate but, to things of a *civil* nature; and *cannot* at all relate to things of *worship* and *religion*. This never can be contested, because the *Magistrate* was, at the time, when the *Scriptures* were wrote, and for near three hundred years after, *Infidel* and *Pagan*. *St. Paul*, therefore, by commanding us *to be subject to the higher powers*; and to obey *Magistrates, for conscience sake, because they are the Ministers of GOD, for good*——does not, in the least, require our obedience to their decrees as to *ceremonies* and *forms* of worship; or, our *conformity* to their establishments, in things of a *religious* nature. No, *St. Paul* himself, and all the *Apostles* were very zealous *Nonconformists*. The grand scope of all their labours, their preaching, their lives was to persuade and draw men off from the *established forms* of worship; and to convince them that, in these affairs, there was *ONE King* only, and *ONE Lord* to whom their homage *alone* was due: Even *JESUS*, who by his sufferings had merited this high honour, and to whom *alone* *GOD* has commanded that, in things of religion, *every knee shall bow*.

Here, then, I again call upon and provoke you to tell me——*WHO* gave the *civil Magistrate* this authority in *religious* matters?——You are *silent*, and cannot say——Well, then, if by the command of *Almighty GOD*, and by the original
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constitution of the *Christian Church*, he hath *none*; then, the subjects of JESUS CHRIST are under no obligation to obey his injunctions, in things of a *religious* nature; consequently, are in no fault in *dissenting* from established forms; and consequently, your censures of them, as *great SINNERS* for so doing, are extremely rash and uncharitable; for which it becomes you, to be humbled greatly before G O D, and to ask pardon of *men*.

See, now, the unhappy *pinch* to which you are reduced——If you say the *Magistrate* has authority to decree *ceremonies*, and *forms of worship*, to make *new terms* of communion, and to determine *controversies of faith*——you then sin against the undoubted *rights* and *constitution* of the *CHRISTIAN Church*; against G O D, against JESUS CHRIST, against *reason* and *common sense*. But if you say that he has not, you then sin against the Church of *England*, against its *laws* and *constitution*: You are a *Dissenter*, at least, in principle; but, perhaps, have not *fortitude* enough to sacrifice, what you call, your *snugness*, by professing openly your *dissent*.

Having thus considered the former part of your *self-repugnant* scheme. 1. That the *Magistrate* has not: And, 2. That he *has* the *authority* which he claims and exercises in your Church: I should now proceed to the other, *viz. That it is lodged in the Church's Pastors and Governors*. But, here, to the surprize of every attentive reader, you content yourself with *asserting*, without paying him the compliment of so much as *attempting to prove* them, possessed of this power. The BIBLE, I thought you knew, to be the *religion of Protestants*; and the SCRIPTURES, the *only rule* of their practice and faith. But behold! a *Protestant*, a *Divine*,

claiming an high *power* for his Pastors and Governors; a *power* in which the peace and purity of the Christian Church are *essentially* concerned; and yet not able, nor when called upon *pretending*, to produce one single *text of Scripture* in support of this claim.

I have pointed you to several express *commands* of the *sacred law*, which directly FORBID and CONDEMN this pretended *power*; have shewn you, that *Christians* are the LORD's *freed-men*, that they are each for himself, *to study, and search the Scriptures*——*To examine and try the spirits*——*To call no man upon earth MASTER*, and are not *to be called RABBI*, i. e. are neither to *acknowledge*, nor to *claim* any authority over others in things of religion, *because ONE only is our Lawgiver and Master, in these things, even CHRIST*; and all *Christians are brethren*. That tho' the *Princes of the Gentiles exercise DOMINION over them*; and they who are great, *exercise AUTHORITY upon them*, it SHALL NOT BE SO AMONGST YOU——What have you replied, Sir, to these plain and direct commands: Have you so much as *attempted* to evade their force? No: but with conscious *impotence* stand still; and see this *Scripture-artillery* demolishing the boasted *thrones* of your Pastors and Governors, and beating down the *high places* to which your imagination had raised them, without so much as extending a feeble hand for their support.

From what has been said, on the point of *Church-power*, you see with how little reason you plume yourself and gentlemen of the establishment, as the *only* proper champions to encounter the Church of *Rome*——“ Upon the head of *Heresy, Schism,*

“ *Schism, Ordination, Tradition, Church-unity,*
 “ and *Catholic-communion*, no Protestant is so
 “ well qualified to write upon these, and so likely
 “ to do it to the conviction of a Papist, as one of
 “ the Church of *England*; but, to be sure, not a
 “ *Protestant Dissenter**.” What Protestant Dis-
 senters can do on the *Papist* controversy, the
Salter’s-Hall lectures will shew to their lasting ho-
 nour. And, in truth, all your mighty champi-
 ons, *Chillingworth, Hales, Stillingfleet, Middle-*
ton, &c. in all their conflicts with the Church of
Rome have been ever forced to quit *their own*, and
 to borrow *our* weapons; and to *these* alone have
 owed the triumphs they have gained.

Councils, Fathers, the Church’s power to decree
rites and authority in controversies of faith ———
 are armour in which no *Protestant* dares look a sa-
 gacious and learned *Jesuit* in the face. No; but
 the *sufficiency of Scripture*, and the *right of private*
judgment (our distinguishing and proper princi-
 ples) are the *only* method of assault before which
 the *Romish* system immediately falls. These, Sir,
 if you know any thing of the state of that contro-
 versy, you must know to have been *the principles*
 upon which your own learned Doctors have de-
 fended the reformation; and *the principles* on
 which alone it is *capable* of defence. But then you
 are to remember also, that they are *principles* on
 which the Church of *England* can never possibly be
 defended; and which, if faithfully and duly fol-
 lowed, would have brought *Chillingworth*, and
Hales, and *Middleton* amongst us; and would
 make every *intelligent* and *honest* Protestant, in

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this kingdom, a *Dissenter* from the established Church.

For if *the* SCRIPTURE be, indeed, a *sufficient and perfect* RULE ; what becomes of your *additional splendors* (as you are pleased to call them) and your *improvements* upon Christianity ! What, of your Church's POWER to *decree ceremonies and rites* ! What, of *Sponsors* and the *cross* in Baptism, *kneeling* at the Lord's-supper, *bowing* to the East, &c ! of which the SCRIPTURES, the *sufficient and perfect* rule, say not a word. And if the *right*, and the *duty* of *private judgment* be acknowledged ; into what a fume, alas ! evaporates the Church's boasted *authority in controversies of faith* ! Your learned Doctors themselves felt, and owned, the difficulty of the part they had to act. And 'tis, really, pleasant to observe ; how, in their attacks upon Dissenters, *Councils* and *Fathers*, *Church-authority* and *Church-power*, *the danger and sin of schism*, &c. are gravely mustered up, and plied warmly upon us. But no sooner does a crafty Jesuit come forth armed, *cap à pèe*, with weapons of this kind, than away they are all flung ! to our quarters they retreat ! Then, *the BIBLE*, *the BIBLE only is the religion of Protestants*, and every man is to *read*, and to *judge for himself* ; then, not those, who *separate* from a Church, that imposes unlawful (unscriptural) terms, are guilty of *schism* ; but the Church alone is guilty in *imposing* such terms.

A slight attention will shew you, with how extremely *ill a grace* a Church of England Divine must appear upon the head of *Schism*, *Tradition*, *Church-unity*—Who by the TRADITIONS of men (*sponsors*, the *cross*, &c.) hath notoriously made void the *commandment of GOD* (to receive

one

one another, but not to doubtful disputations *.) Who breaks, in a flagrant manner, the UNITY of the *Christian Church*, by setting up NEW terms of fellowship and communion in it; and by casting out such as *Christ* receives into it: And who declares, before the world, against CATHOLIC-COMMUNION, by refusing to admit any to the two sacraments of religion: except, besides what *Christ* and his *Apostles* have ordained, they submit also to some rites which *themselves* have ordained, as improvements upon the plan which the inspired *Apostles* left.——And is this, now, a man to encounter *Romish* emissaries? Must he not go forth with infinite disadvantage, and feel his own weapons turned violently upon himself? But, the *Dis-senter*, who stands fast to his distinguishing and proper principles (*sufficiency of Scripture, and right of private judgment*) at once beats them from the strong holds of *Councils* and *Fathers* (where you have been long assaulting, but not able to dislodge them) and makes all their *learned sophistry* fall before the sacred force of the BIBLE and COMMON SENSE. And hence it is, as before observed, that the swarms of unhappy profelytes, which these seducers are said to make, are all drawn from your, not one, that I have ever heard of, from our Churches: Your doctrines and forms too naturally preparing them to take that fatal step.

But it is time that we now quit the subject of *Church-power*. I have treated it the more largely, because it enters into the *essence*, and is the one single point, every person sees, on which the whole controversy turns. Your other two points, the sa-

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cramen-

* Rom. xiv. 1.

sacramental test, and the *regal supremacy*, I shall dismiss in fewer words.

As to the first, the *sacramental TEST* — I perceive nothing in your *Appendix* which either *merits* or *needs* a particular reply. Only because you still insist, *that as the law now stands, the Priest has a power of repelling evil livers, when they come to receive the Sacrament, as a qualification for a place*; and by this wrong apprehension, are kept from viewing the affair in a light so distasteful as it really deserves; I shall offer a few things for your illumination also here: Presuming, when you see, that *you have not power*, in that case, *to refuse the CHRISTIAN COMMUNION to the wickedest man living*, you will groan under the disgraceful yoke; and for the honour of *Christianity*, and the ease of your own consciences, will be the first to wish its repeal. Now this is a *point of law*; and has been given against you, by the learned in that profession. And, if you attentively weigh the case, their *opinion* will appear grounded upon reasons of very great and unanswerable strength. Because, if the Priest has a *liberty of DISCRETION* in this case, it is then in his power to deprive the *King* of the services of his loyal and good subjects; as also, to deprive the *subjects* of some of the most valuable favours of the Prince; yea, the *Priest* has then a power to put a *negative*, in many cases, upon the nominations of his *SOVEREIGN* to posts of the highest dignity and importance in the State.

His Majesty appoints a person to some great office in his army, his household, or his fleet; but *the LAW* forbids him *to act* (at least, but for a short time) till he has first taken the *sacramental test*: He comes, therefore, according to *law*, to qualify for his place. No, Sir, answers the Priest;

I say

I say you are a prophane and wicked man, a notorious *evil liver*: I am authorized therefore by the *rubric*, and commanded by the *canon*, to refuse you the *Sacrament*; and, be assured, I will not give it — So here is the King's commission, the subject's expectations, and the officer's good services, all quashed at once.

But can it enter into an imagination so vague as even *yours*, that our *laws* have put it in the *Priest's* power thus to bar the King's commission to a *General*, an *Admiral*, a *Secretary of State*. Gentlemen who too much merit, perhaps, the character of *evil livers* may, sometimes, by the *royal choice* be appointed to high temporal offices; and may be capable of discharging them with great advantage to their country, and great honour to themselves. But, must the *Priest's consent* be asked! at his *discretion* must it lie! whether the person, whom the *King* hath honoured with an high commission, shall presume to proceed in the execution of his trust! — Yes, it really thus lies in the *Priest's* power (you will have it) to put a *negative* upon the crown. Without the *Priest's approbation* of him, as being NOT an *evil liver*, no officer shall presume, nor can be qualified by law, to *act*.

I congratulate you much, Sir, that you are now even with the *civil Magistrate*. The *Noli Prosequi's* and *Prohibitions* he has granted to stop proceedings in your *ecclesiastical* courts, have been matter of long grievance: Now, you have it in your power to make ample *reprizals* on him. You have now a power, by *LA W*, to judge *after*, *above*, the *King*. Tho' his Majesty ever so much *wants* and *desires* the services of a brave officer, YOU are first to *sit in judgment* on him; to consider whether he is an *evil liver*; and according as YOU

pronounce concerning his *moral character*, he shall, or shall not, be qualified and allowed to act—
 These, doubtless, are the days, of which blessed *Laud* is said to prophesy! Who *hoped to see the time, when no Jack Gentleman in England should dare to stand covered before the meanest Priest*. The holy *Martyr*, indeed, died unblest with the sight. But, you, his son and successor in doctrine and spirit, are taking bold strides to reach *Pisgab-top*, from whence to feast your eyes with that *promised* happy state.

I might rest the matter here—and hope you are now convinced of the presumptuous and high nature of *the power* you are thus, publickly, again claiming for *the Priest*: But, to silence for ever all doubts on this head, I will present you with an *authority* of irresistible weight. This is no other than the lower House of *Convocation*, anno 1704; staunch Champions for the Church, you know, as ever honoured the *British* isle; in their address to the upper House, amongst *Gravamina Cleri* grievances to be redressed, they represent——“ The
 “ increasing difficulties of the parochial *Clergy*,
 “ about administering the holy Sacrament indifferently to all persons who demand it, in order
 “ to qualify themselves for office; because they
 “ see not how they could, in several cases, act
 “ conformably to the *rubrics* and *canons* of the
 “ Church, in repelling such persons as were *unworthy*, and particularly notorious *Schismatics*,
 “ without exposing themselves to vexatious and
 “ expensive suits at law *.”——This was the *construction* which this learned body of *Clergy*, you see, put upon this *law*; but a *construction*, because
 I had

* Tindal's Hist. of Eng. Vol. III. page 685.

I had made it, which you, blessed with superior light, take upon you to pronounce.—“*forced, unnatural, whimsical, unequitable* *.”—Happy ’tis nothing worse!

But, to conclude this point——If, as the law now stands, *the Priest has*, as you affirm, *a power to repel evil livers*; pray! what is the reason that the *rubrics* and *canons*, which so solemnly oblige him to it, are not only, not *faithfully* observed, but most *shamefully* violated, and quite trampled under foot? Why, amongst the swarms of *notorious* evil livers, *Heretics, Blasphemers*, and open *Unbelievers*, who continually come to the LORD’S TABLE, to qualify for a place; do we never hear of *one* rejected by the Priest? What! is there no conscience, no integrity or honour left amongst those who administer this holy rite of religion! seeing the *rubric* requires, and the *canons* oblige to *reject* these evil livers; and the *scandal* of receiving them (both to *Deists* without, and to *Christians* within) is so crying and flagrant; Why, in the *name of GOD*, whose *Ministers* and *Stewards* you profess yourselves to be, are these *enemies* to his government, these *aliens* from his family, these *Despisers* of his Son, never rejected, but ever tamely received, as *his CHILDREN*, to *his TABLE*——Why! but because the Priest *knows* there is a LAW which hangs heavily over him, and threatens to punish with severe penalty its breach: And this being the case, he chuses rather to throw himself upon the mercies of GOD, than upon the indignation of *man*.

And now, Sir, if with this dreadful and oppressive yoke upon your neck; whilst scoffing *Infidels* laugh,

laugh, and discerning *Christians* mourn; you are easy and well pleased; and bless yourself, and your Church in the protection of *this law*: All I shall say, at present, is, that I envy not your felicity; but heartily thank Heaven, I have neither lot nor share in this matter. Only, hear the word, which GOD sent by his *Prophet* to certain time-serving *Priests*. Ezek. xlv. 6, 7. *Thou shalt say to the rebellious house; let it suffice you of all your abominations; in that ye have brought into my sanctuary strangers, uncircumcised in heart, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute it; even MY HOUSE, when ye offer my bread—they have broken my covenant, because of all your abominations.*

I have said too much on your *first* topic, of *Church-power*, to have either room or occasion to add many things on your *last*, our *constitution in Church and State*. Here, indeed, I observe with pleasure, that amidst the shew you affect to make of confuting my account of the *regal supremacy*, and of our *constitution*, you hardly, in one single instance, presume to contradict it. My account, Sir, was founded upon *fact* and upon *law*. After close examination, I suppose you found it to be so; and therefore though, to save appearances, you would seem to say something on this subject also; yet in your whole 14 pages, there is scarce the shew of any opposition to what I had advanced.

As for the *form of speaking* in use amongst us — *Our constitution in Church and State* — That it is really an *impropriety*, as generally understood, I do not at all hesitate (with due submission to the great authorities by whom it is used) again to insist. It is a *form of speaking*, no doubt, drawn from the usage of *Popish* times; before the *Reformation* of

of our religion took place. For *then* there, truly, was a *constitution in Church*, distinct from, and independent of, our *constitution in State*. The Church had, then, its laws, its rights, its officers and powers, and its sovereign or supreme head, *peculiar* to itself, and *apart* from the state. But, *now*, by the reformation all that *independency* and *distinction* is abolished; it is now become entirely and absolutely a *civil system*: There are *now* no laws in the Church (I mean none of *human* enactment) but what were made by the *civil Magistrate*, and receive all their obligation and authority from him: There are now no *officers* in the Church but what are constituted by the authority and direction of the *Magistrate*, and are all liable to be unmade and deprived again by him——But that our *constitution in Church*, is nothing really, but a *civil* or *parliamentary* constitution; has, with incontestible evidence, been shown in the preceding letters; and is a truth, indeed, so plain, that no intelligent or sober member of your Church will, I apprehend, so much as *attempt* to deny.

Our *constitution*, therefore, being now changed by the happy *reformation*; so, doubtless, would this *form of speaking* too; but seems to have been retained for reasons of policy, to sooth the *weakness* of those who were then the *weakest* of all the people, and the most averse to the reformation, I mean the *Clergy* *. With the same condescending views,

* So because 'tis said —— *The Lords Spiritual and Temporal* —— Will any one therefore plead, that a *Bishop* is of higher rank than a *Duke*? 'Tis no more than giving a Lady the upper place; or, according to the apostolic precept, *honouring the weaker vessel*. What defect of *argument* does it shew, to lay such stress upon a mere *compliment*!

views, probably, it is still kept in use ; but in real strictness and propriety to talk of our *constitution in Church and State*, is not only to put the *body* before the *head*, the *effect* before the *cause*, the *handmaid* before the *mistress* ; but it is to convey an idea your authorities could not possibly intend to convey, because not founded in truth, *viz.* That the *Church* has a *constitution* distinct from, independent of, yea prior or superior to, our *constitution in State*.—By the way, you will remember also, that the *Presbyterian Church of Scotland* is as *essential*, *fundamental*, and *unalterable* a part of our *present ecclesiastical CONSTITUTION*, as the *episcopal Church of England* can ever pretend to be.

My account of the *POWER* which our laws and constitution give to the *Kings* and *QUEENS* of this realm, in affairs *ecclesiastical* ; to instruct, over-rule, direct, controul, all the *Archbishops*, *Bishops*, and *Priests* of this kingdom, in all their *sacerdotal* and most *spiritual* concerns, &c. you do not pretend to *litigate*, but rather attempt to *vindicate* and *explain*. But you unhappily forget the one grand and material *point*, for which it was introduced ; and to which, above all other, it concerned you to speak ; and that is, to *reconcile* this constitution of the *Church of England*, with the constitution of the *Church of Christ* : And to shew, that *Dissenters* cannot separate from the *one*, without the *danger* and the *high crime* of renting themselves from the *other*. This was what you asserted, and flourished copiously upon ; but are now, I presume, too well instructed to endeavour to support. You now see them, Sir, to be two *distinct* and quite *different* societies : And will be henceforward eased of those *painful* commiserations over
the

the souls of your *dissenting* brethren, with which your generous mind laboured ; and be terrified no more with direful apprehensions on account of our *Schism*, which seem all your life long to have held you in bondage.

There is a little *unhappy slip* which, tho' not quite in place, I shall take notice of here——In page 13. of your *Appendix*, you charge me “ with “ *false play* in citing your XXXIVth article, as “ *declaring expressly that your Church ceremonies “ were ordained by the civil Magistrate. And ask “ me——Did you find there any such words?*” And yet, with agreeable surprize, I find you either so uncautious, or so honest, as within a few lines, to cite the very words of the *article*, which support, in the strongest manner, the sense I had given ; where *an open and wilful violation of these ceremonies is, by the article, declared to be an hurting the authority of the CIVIL MAGISTRATE.* Can a violation of these ceremonies violate the *Magistrate's* authority, if by *his authority* they had not been *ordained*?

But these are small matters, in comparison with what follows. The affair of Mr. *Whiston* I thought you would gladly have let sleep. The case, to be sure, wrung much : You have been once and again flinging to rid yourself of it ; but the manner in which you now do it, rather sorely wounds, than gives you relief. “ You tax me with *misrepresentation*, and with no mean talent that “ way *.” Yea, have the courage to confront me, with a citation from Bp. *Burnet* to whom I had referred, as supporting my account. But what will the world say, Sir ! How will all your *friends*,
if

if not your *heart*, reproach you ! and the *Learned*, amongst whom you rank, hold you in great derision ! When they see you undertaking to give the public an account of his Lordship's *history* of that case ; but, either carelessly overlooking, or wilfully suppressing, the *material* and *important* passages, which clearly and irrefragably support my account.

“ His Lordship, say you, * reports it thus——
 “ That it seeming doubtful, whether the Convocation could, in the first instance, proceed against a man for heresy ; and it being certain that their proceedings, if not warranted by law, might involve them in a *premunire*, the upper House, in an address, *prayed the Queen to ask the opinion of the Judges, and such others as she thought fit*, concerning these doubts, that they might know how the law stood in this matter.”
 Here you stop short with the *Bishop's* narration : having either not *patience* to read, or not *honesty* to write further ; and then, with flourish, ask——
 “ Will these accounts now authorize you to represent, as you do, *the two Houses of Convocation*, as waiting upon her Majesty ; and that too to be instructed by *her*, and to learn *her judgment* ; and not that neither, how the law stood in relation to their proceedings, but how the gospel stood in relation to the opinions of Mr. *Whiston*, and the mystery of the Trinity ? And do you not now perceive your misrepresentation of the case, and that I did not *talk without book*, when I spake of it as a *specimen* of your talent, which, indeed, is not mean that way.”

There

There is one thing I here perceive, Sir ; which is, that if you do not *talk without book*, yet when *the book is before you*, you either want *capacity or integrity* to make a proper use of it. For besides the *partial and maimed* account which you have given of this matter, his Lordship expressly adds the *important passages* which follow ; whence the *public* will please to observe, with how little *fairness and truth* you treat this famous case ; and how great is both the *Church's* and *my own* infelicity ; she in having an *advocate*, and I an *opponent*, capable of such dishonourable and low methods of defence.

His Lordship says——“ That by the act of 1st
 “ of *Elizabeth*, which defined what should be
 “ judged heresy, *that judgment* was declared to be
 “ in the CROWN——The Bishops in Convocation
 “ drew out several propositions from Mr. *Whiston's*
 “ books, which seemed plainly to be reviv-
 “ ing of *Arianism*, and *censured* them as such.
 “ The lower House (excepting to one proposition)
 “ *censured* them in the same manner. This the
 “ *Archbishop*, being then disabled by the gout, sent
 “ by one of the *Bishops* to the QUEEN, for *her*
 “ *assent* ; (Page 1194, *Approbation*) who promis-
 “ ed to CONSIDER OF IT. At their (the Con-
 “ vocation's) meeting next winter, no answer
 “ being come from the QUEEN, *two BISHOPS*
 “ were sent to ASK it, and to receive her Majesty's
 “ *pleasure* in it ; but *she* could not tell what was
 “ become of the paper the *Archbishop* had sent her.
 “ So an extract of the *censure* was again sent to
 “ her ; but she THOUGHT NOT FIT to send
 “ *any answer* to it. So *Whiston's* affair slept, and
 “ all further proceedings against him were stop-
 “ ped, *since the QUEEN did not CONFIRM*
 “ the

“ the step that we had made; tho’ he afterward
 “ published a large work in four volumes oc-
 “ tavo *.”

Here let it be noted. 1. The judgment of what is, or is not, to be treated as *Heresy*, is, by our apostolic constitution lodged wholly in the CROWN. The QUEEN, when such wears it, is the proper, the sole judge, what doctrines and books shall be censured as HERETICAL: What principles and tenets are, or are not, contrary to the holy orthodox faith.

Note. 2. The two Houses, having extracted several passages from Mr. *Whiston*’s books, and censured them as heretical †; deputed first one, then two Bishops to wait upon the QUEEN, to ASK her approbation and assent, to receive her Majesty’s pleasure in this affair, and to desire her confirmation, without which, their censure was of not the least signification or validity in the Church.

3. Upon the receipt of this request the QUEEN, as sole Judge, promised to CONSIDER of it. The affair was of great importance, viz. “ What
 “ the primitive apostolic doctrine was concerning
 “ the Trinity, Incarnation, Nature and Genera-
 “ tion of the LOGOS? Whether there were three
 “ persons existing in one undivided substance: Or,
 “ whether the Logos was distinct in essence from
 “ the

* *Burnet’s Hist. of his Times*, Vol. VI. pages 133, 34, 35, 94. Edit. 12mo.

† The *Archbishops* and *Bishops* in their address to the Queen, say, that Mr. *Whiston* had advanced several DAMNABLE and BLASPHEMOUS assertions against the doctrine and worship of the ever blessed Trinity: And, in their censure, they earnestly beseech all Christian people, by the mercies of CHRIST, to take heed how they give ear to these false doctrines, as they tender the honour and glory of our Saviour, &c.

“ the Father ; not created, nor made, but in an
 “ ineffable manner, begotten from eternity ?
 “ And, finally, whether the *apostolical constitu-*
 “ *tions* were a genuine and inspired book ; and a
 “ true part of the sacred canon ?” Her Majesty
 was now applied to, by her two Houses of *Convo-*
cation, and requested, as **SOLE JUDGE**, to pro-
 nounce *authoritatively* upon *these points*, *i. e.* to
 tell them whether Mr. *Whiston's* doctrine was to
 be received or rejected ; to be considered as *Heresy*,
 or not ; in this Church. The **QUEEN**, as became
 a wise *Judge*, refused to pronounce *rashly* : She took
 time to **CONSIDER** of it ; to weigh sedately in her
 mind the merits of the cause. lest she should con-
 demn the innocent.

Note, *The Scriptures*, and the *four first general*
Councils, are the measure *set by law*, to judge of
Heresy : Her Majesty, therefore, being now re-
 quested by her *Clergy* to judge *authoritatively* in
 this important case, acted a worthy part in *defer-*
ring her **JUDGMENT**, 'till she had *examined* care-
 fully *the rule* by which she was to judge.

Observe, 4. After *the QUEEN* had taken
 time *maturely* to **CONSIDER** of these deep and
 mysterious points, she **THOUGHT NOT FIT** to
send any answer. Upon her *Majesty's* **THOUGHTS**,
 the issue of this great affair is seen absolutely to de-
 pend. Finally,

'Tis worthy to be observed. 5. That her *Ma-*
jesty's **THOUGHTS** and **JUDGMENT**, on this
 weighty case, were *quite* **DIFFERENT** from those
 of her learned *Bishops* and *Clergy*. They thought
 Mr. *Whiston's* writings “ contained *damnable* and
 “ *wicked* doctrines, and earnestly beseech all Chris-
 “ tian people, by *the mercies of Christ*, to take
 “ heed how they give ear, &c.” — and judged
 them

them to deserve a public and solemn *censure*: Her Majesty THOUGHT OTHERWISE. She did not THINK FIT to confirm the *step the Convocation had made*. In consequence of which, their proceedings were all stopped; and the solemn *censure* they had passed with all their earnest *obtestations*, by the mercies of CHRIST, evaporate into air.—This is a fair and true state of the case——What improvements are here made, by the wisdom of later ages, in the primitive *apostolic* plan! Behold the WOMAN now empowered, not only to teach, but to usurp authority over, the man; over all the *Archbishops, Bishops, and Priests* of this realm; to vacate their most solemn censures; to quash and stop at once their *spiritual* proceedings, in an affair where *blasphemous doctrines*, and *damnable and wicked errors*, were bringing danger of everlasting ruin to the souls over whom they watched! See here, Sir, the *two scales*, that are to try doctrines and opinions in your holy *apostolic* Church: In one, is laid the united judgment of all the Bishops and Clergy in *Convocation* convened; in the other, the QUEEN's alone: Lo, the former mounts, and kicks the beam! The *single* judgment of the QUEEN, in the balance of the Church, weighs more than *that* of all the learned Bishops and Priests of the realm!

And is not this, now, exactly consonant to the account I had given? “Is not here, Sir, the very
 “comely and edifying sight (at which you ex-
 “cept)* of the two Houses of Convocation wait-
 “ing upon the good Queen, to be instructed by
 “her Majesty, whether that gentleman's books
 “concerning the Trinity were to be condemned,
 “as

* Appen. page 37.

“ as heretical, or not ? ” Do they tell us, “ you ask, of the Synod laying their censure before the Queen, to have her judgment upon it ? ” Yes—“ And of their waiting upon a WOMAN, who could be supposed to know as little of this matter as of the motion of the stars, to learn from her mouth, what the Church is to believe, and what to reject, as to this great mystery of faith ? ” Yes ; you see, with your own eyes, that this is really the case. Why, Sir, will you constrain me to expatiate upon things which reflect no honour upon the Church ; and by a rash and indiscreet defence hurt the cause you would support ! How much wiser is the part your candid brethren are now acting, who, like dutiful and pious sons, are taking a veil, and walking backward, to cover the nakedness which has been too long exposed to the jests of scoffing-unbelievers*.

As your Letters and Defences breathe a noble compassion to the straying souls of Dissenters ; the extraordinary instance, with which you conclude the whole, ought not to be overlooked. You are concerned, it seems, “ that I have read, and in several instances agree in sentiment and reasoning—with the author of *the Rights of the Christian*

* See a series of such exertions of feminine archiepiscopal, pastoral, authority, throughout the whole reign of Qu. Elizabeth ; particularly, the case of Archbishop Grinda ; whom she sequestered, in great wrath, from his archiepiscopal functions, for refusing to obey a rash and tyrannical order of the Queen relating to Church-matters. Under this sequestration he continued many years. The two Houses of Convocation presented to the Queen a most humble and earnest petition for his restoration, but could not obtain it. Vid. Fuller's Ch. Hist. Book IX. page 120.—Neal's Hist. Pur. Vol. I. pages 358, 374.

“ *Christian Church*; and appear to have much
 “ studied and profited by that worthy author—
 “ And are sorry to find dissenting Ministers and
 “ Gentlemen dealing so much in books of this
 “ sort. So long as this is the case, what hope of
 “ a comprehension! Or, indeed, who would wish
 “ for it! * ” I have read, Sir, and I hope profited
 by *the Rights*, &c. As you profess to have read,
 and I hope not without profit, *Bellarmin*, an au-
 thor incomparably worse. As for *my agreement*
 with THE RIGHTS, &c. as far as that author
 agrees with *Truth*, with *Scripture*, with *Law*, you
 must give me leave to say (without augmenting, I
 hope, your sorrow) that I esteem it not the least
 reproach. Nay for once, Sir, if you please, I will
 make you my confessor, and frankly own, that in
 many things I agree in sentiment and reasoning
 with one far worse than either *Bellarmin* or *the*
rights, &c. Who this may be, you will see, *Luke*
iv. 41. James ii. 19.

Dissenting Ministers and Gentlemen, I presume,
deal in books of all sorts, from whence they can
 gather useful knowledge, and improve and enlarge
 their minds. They have dealt in the writings of
 the shrewdest *Deists* (books much worse than *the*
Rights, &c.) as you see by the many noble de-
 fences of *Christianity* which their pens have pro-
 duced. Your—*dealing in books of this sort*—is a
 bugbear, which may frighten children in under-
 standing; but Dissenters, you should have known,
have not so learned CHRIST. They are comman-
 ded to *try the spirits*; to *examine*, and *prove all*
things; and remember the noble *Bereans*, who are
 com-

* Appen. pages 41, 44.

commended by St. *Paul* for *searching* carefully into the grounds and evidence of things before they gave their assent. And if this *liberty* of examination, and of speaking and writing freely upon subjects of religion, be a bar to a *comprehension*—very long may it remain! It is the glory of *Christianity* that it shuns not the severest search: 'Tis *bigotry* and *error* only that love to hide themselves in darkness, and grow touchy and alarmed if you seek to bring them into open fight.

We acknowledge, Sir, your goodness in bringing down to our understandings the mystery of *CONSECRATIONS of Churches and Church-yards*; and your kind attempt to illustrate the usefulness, edification, and comeliness of this ceremony. There are some *previous questions*, which I could wish to see answered, before we enter thoroughly into the grand debate—As, whether you think the Apostle *Paul*, in all his apostolic labours and travels thro' the Churches, ever *consecrated a plat of ground*? Whether any of the *twelve Apostles*, amongst the *miracles* and *mighty works* which they every where wrought, ever did this *wondrous thing*? Whether the *synagogues*, where our SAVIOUR preached; the *chamber* where he instituted, and first celebrated his sacred Supper; the *upper room* where the Apostles met, when they actually received the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost; the *house of Aquila and Priscilla, Nymphas, &c.* in which were *Christian Churches*; had really any *other consecration* than our places of worship have? And yet, whether *these* were not as much the *house of God*, and *places of his more immediate presence*, as any splendid *Cathedral*,

dral, now consecrated with all the pomp of *sacerdotal* device? *

You appeal to “ the forms which Bp. *Andrews* and *others* have used in their *consecrations*. And ask—What think you now? Is there any thing “ *ridiculous* or *superstitious* in all this? †” Yes; extremely much of both, if they at all resemble that of A. B. *Laud* (the only one I have ever seen) when he consecrated the Churches of St. *Catherine Cree*, St. *Giles’s*, and others in *London*. An intolerable piece of *ecclesiastical* foppery, sufficient to have made a *Popish Cardinal* blush, and which no Protestant can read but with indignant concern! The form has, in larger histories, been more than once published; but having never seen it in any little tract, I shall beg leave to transcribe it, for the edification of our common readers. A striking instance of the *danger* of indulging *human invention* in things of religion; and which shews, into what wilds of ridiculous superstition even *learned* minds are apt to run, when they leave the *simplicity of the Gospel of CHRIST*.

“ The *Bishop* came attended with several of the “ high commission, and some *Civilians*. At his “ approach to the west door of the Church, which “ was shut and guarded by halberdeers, some that “ were appointed for that purpose, cried with a “ loud voice——*Open, open, ye everlasting “ doors, that, the King of Glory may come in! Pre- “ sently the doors were opened, and the Bishop, “ with*

* You have forgotten, perhaps, the doctrine of your own *homily*, to which you have several times solemnly subscribed,——“ That “ in *Tertullian’s* time, 160 years after *CHRIST*, Christians had “ no other temples but *common houses*, whither for the most part they “ secretly resorted.” *Peril of Idol.* Part III. page 159.

† Appen. page 45.

“ with some Doctors and principal men, entered.
 “ As soon as they were within the place, his
 “ *Lordship* fell down upon his knees; and, with
 “ eyes lifted up, and his arms spread abroad, said,
 “ *This place is holy, the ground is holy; in the*
 “ *name of the FATHER, SON, and HOLY*
 “ *GHOST, I pronounce it holy.* Then walking
 “ up the middle isle towards the chancel, he took
 “ up some of the dust, and threw it into the air
 “ several times. When he approached near the
 “ rail of the communion-table, he bowed towards
 “ it five or six times; and returning, went round
 “ the church, with his attendants, in procession;
 “ saying first the hundredth and then the nine-
 “ teenth *Psalm*, as prescribed in the *Roman Pon-*
 “ *tifical.* He then read several collects, in one
 “ of which he *prays* GOD to accept of that beauti-
 “ ful building, and concludes thus—*We CON-*
 “ *SECRATE this Church, and separate it unto*
 “ *THEE as HOLY GROUND, not to be prophane*
 “ *any more to common use.* In another he *prays*
 “ —*That ALL who should hereafter be buried*
 “ *within the circuit of this HOLY and SACRED*
 “ *place, may rest in their sepulchres in peace, till*
 “ *Christ's coming to judgment, and may then rise to*
 “ *eternal life and happiness.*”

“ Then the *Bishop*, sitting under a cloth of
 “ state, in the isle of the chancel, near the com-
 “ munion-table, took a written book in his hand,
 “ and pronounced *curses* upon those who should
 “ hereafter prophane that *holy place* by musters of
 “ soldiers, or keeping prophane law-courts, or
 “ carrying burdens through it: and at the end of
 “ every curse he bowed to the east, and said, *Let*
 “ *all the people say amen.* When the *curses* were
 “ ended, which were about twenty, he pronoun-
 “ ced a like number of *blessings* upon ALL that had
 “ any hand in framing and building that *sacred*

“ and beautiful church; and on those that had
 “ given, or should hereafter give, any chalices,
 “ plate, ornaments, or other utensils: And, at
 “ the end of every *blessing*, he bowed to the EAST,
 “ and said, *Let all the people say amen.* After this
 “ came the sermon, then the sacrament, which
 “ the *Bishop* consecrated and administered in the
 “ following manner.

“ As he approached the *altar*, he made five or
 “ six low bows; and coming up to the side of it,
 “ where the *bread* and *wine* were covered, he
 “ bowed *seven times*. Then, after reading many
 “ prayers, he came near the *bread*; and gently
 “ lifting up the corner of the napkin, beheld it,
 “ and immediately letting fall the napkin, he re-
 “ treated hastily a step or two, and made three
 “ low obeisances. His *Lordship* then advanced,
 “ and, having uncovered *the bread*, bowed three
 “ times as before. Then he laid his hand on the
 “ cup, which was full of wine, with a cover up-
 “ on it; which having let go, he stepped back,
 “ and bowed three times towards it; then he
 “ came near again, and lifting up the cover of
 “ the cup, looked into it, and seeing the *wine*,
 “ let fall the cover again, retired back, and bow-
 “ ed as before. Then the elements were conse-
 “ crated, and the *Bishop* having first received,
 “ gave it to some principal men in their surplices,
 “ hoods and tippets; after which, many prayers
 “ being said, the solemnity of the *Consecration*
 “ ended.”

This, Sir, was the *sense*, and this the *manner*
 of that celebrated martyr and governor of your
Church, in this business of CONSECRATION.
 And, what now think you? Was there nothing
ridiculous or *superstitious* in all this! You seem,
 indeed, to have not quite so *exalted* an opinion of
 this solemnity as his *Lordship*; but as *the Church*
 has

has no where (that I know) explained herself as to this matter; nor *censured* *Laud's* conduct; nor prescribed any set form in which this ceremony is to be done; any *Bishop*, I apprehend, at present, is at full liberty to use the same, and may now consecrate a Church after the manner of *St. Catherine Cree* Church. And pray! to whom shall I attend, as best knowing and expressing the *Church's* sense in this point, to the great Archbishop *Laud*; or, to the—*Mr. White*, sometime Fellow of *St. John's* College, *Cambridge*.

I have now done with your *Appendix*—There is another OFFICE of your *Liturgy*, alike liable to the severe exceptions of all well-instructed *Christians*, and to the sneers of insulting *Deists*, as any I have yet considered; and that is, your OFFICE for the Ordination of *Priests and Deacons*. This, if you call me forth again, I may more particularly shew. At present, I only ask—Whether to your *sober reason* it really appears a *fit* question, to be put to EVERY young Gentleman that comes from the *University* for orders to the Bishop; *whether he trusts that he is INWARDLY MOVED BY THE HOLY GHOST to take upon him this office?* And for EVERY such young gentleman to declare solemnly as in *GOD's* presence, that he trusts that he is SO INWARDLY MOVED. The gentlemen, and their communication; the manners, the taste, and state of the *universities*; you, perhaps, better know, than I shall pretend. Tell me then, before *GOD*, is their moral state SUCH that you can reasonably think EVERY student that comes thence, when he gets a title to a living, and applies for orders to the Bishop, doth really feel himself inwardly moved by the HOLY GHOST to make that application? How is it we are not afraid to trifle in an affair so exceeding serious and important!

Is it not coming too near to the sin of *Ananias*, viz. LYING to the HOLY GHOST?

And when, kneeling before the Bishop, he lays his hand on the student's head, is it not a strange saying—*Receive the HOLY GHOST—Whose sins THOU dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins THOU dost retain, they are retained; in the name of the FATHER, of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST. Amen.* I make no reflections at present: but only say: that to me it appears quite amazing, that, in an age of such discernment and freedom of enquiry, *this form* is suffered to stand. And, in the language of your *collect*, I very heartily pray—*That Almighty GOD, who alone worketh great marvels, would send down upon our Bishops and Curates the healthful spirit of his grace, the spirit of wisdom and humility!* assured, that this *stone of stumbling*, in the way of sagacious *Infidels*, will then quickly be removed.

But to conclude. I have the pleasure, Sir, to be persuaded that your mind is not *now* filled with those *swelling* and *high* thoughts of the excellence of your *Liturgy*, as when our correspondence opened. *Dissenters*, you find, are not the only persons who except strongly against your forms. Many of your learned *Clergy* have, in a candid and respectful manner, and yet with a becoming courage, expressed great dissatisfaction with them. What *effect* their attempt for the enlargement of the Church's bounds, and for a further *reformation* and *review* will produce; time alone must shew. Upon the foot it at present stands, the Church's situation, to every discerning person, must appear extremely *critical* and uncertain.

It is *difficult* to defend it against the crafty attacks of *POPERY* on the one hand; and, I think, actually *impossible* to support it against the assaults of *INFIDELITY* on the other. Betwixt these

two stones, is there no room to apprehend its being quickly ground to powder? To the *injurious* idea which many of your *forms* give of the *Christian Religion*, the unhappy increase of *Deism* is, undoubtedly, in great measure owing. And increase it further will, there is the highest reason to believe, if *these forms* which are the just offence and ridicule of *Unbelievers*, are not timely dismissed. But, when those who now boast themselves the *Successors* of the Apostles, and the only regular *Pastors* and *Ministers* of Christ, shall give proof that they are possessed of a truly *apostolic* virtue, and shall no longer *seek their own*, but the things of JESUS CHRIST; a review will be no distant, nor difficult event.

In the mean time, *Dissenters* have the satisfaction to reflect; that amidst various discouragements, they have, by their *dissent*, approved themselves LOYAL to the only SOVEREIGN of the Church, and FAITHFUL to a *sacred trust* committed to them by GOD, for which they must give account. They rejoice in the *review*, that they have entered their protest against the *Impositions* and *Inventions* of men; which have corrupted the *Simplicity*, enervated the *Vigour*, deformed the *Beauty*, and broken the *Communion* of the body of Christ. And whatever rash censures they may happen to incur from the *prejudiced*, the *weak*, and the *interested* now: They, with great assurance hope, to be not only *approved*, but *applauded* by their JUDGE; and to receive, at his appearing, *Honour* proportioned to their present *Reproach*.

When, it shall please the *Almighty Sovereign* to awaken in the *Christian* world a spirit of genuine CHRISTIANITY——When true HONOUR shall prevail over *Cowardice* and *Temporising*; and INTEGRITY and TRUTH over *Falshood* and Error

Error——When that slavish ignoble principle, that we are to conform to the established worship of the country where we dwell, whatever it be, shall be held in deserved reproach: a principle that debases greatly and corrupts the human soul; puts out its intellectual eye; chains up its noblest powers; robs it of its highest glory, viz. the searching into religious subjects, and offering to its CREATOR a reasonable service; in short, a principle that directly tends to banish every thing that deserves the name of Religion; to drive all Truth, and Honour, and Honesty, from amongst men; that will justify a man's professing himself a Mahometan at Constantinople, a Pagan at Peking, a Papist at Rome——When this infamous and base principle, I say, shall be treated with just contempt; and men shall be every where disposed, to seek with impartiality, and to practise without disguise RIGHTEOUSNESS and TRUTH——Then, Sir, will the character of a rational DISSENTER be had in universal honour. Then will such appear to have been the only consistent Protestants; the true Patrons of Christian Liberty, Church Unity, and Catholick Communion; and the only body of Christians upon whom the guilt of Schism does not really rest; because they open their Communion to every sincere Christian; and require no terms, but what CHRIST and his Apostles have required in the Church. If you will not throw in your lot, and share with them in those honours; you must e'en take your own way. However, rest assured that I am, with due affection and esteem,



S I R,

Yours, &c.

A DISSENTER.

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